Harsher drugs bill OKd: 99 g of shabu means death

STORY BELOW, COLUMN 1

DI NAMAN TAKOT SA TUBIG... TAKOT MABASA YUNG BOOTS AT MEDYAS

Piggyback case hounds Air Force

By Martin P. Marfil

IT WAS a display of Filipino hospitality, and not a mere case of a general afraid of getting his feet wet.

The Philippine Air Force is trying to

PIGGYBACK/A9

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Erap dismisses lawyers

'This early, I sense I'll no longer obtain justice'

By Volt Contreras

TAKING advantage of a visiting TV crew, Joseph Estrada announced in his detention cell last night that he was terminating the services of his lawyers, saying he has lost all hopes of obtaining justice from the courts.

"I have already instructed my lawyers to withdraw from all the cases filed against me," he told "TV Patrol."

He further said in Filipino: "I tried my best to comply with and submit myself to our courts. But this early I sense that I will no longer obtain justice."

The news report quoted him as saying that his decision was prompted by the Supreme Court's rejection Tuesday of the bail petition of his co-accused son Jinggoy.

The Supreme Court also junked the younger Estrada's petition seeking to quash the plunder complaint filed against him by the Office of the Ombudsman in April last year.

"TV Patrol" showed Estrada seated at a table and surrounded by his lawyers, who then approached him one by one to thank him and shake his hand.

Estrada has nine defense lawyers, most of whom had served him since his aborted Senate impeachment trial.

They were retired Supreme Court Justice Serafin Cuevas, former Manila Prosecutor Jose Flaminiano and son Jay, former Sen. Rene Saguisag, former UP College of Law dean

ERAP/A16

Erap refuses to enter plea in 'Jose Velarde' case

By Volt Contreras

OUSTED President Joseph Estrada refused to enter a plea on his arraignment yesterday for illegally using an alias on bank records although he admitted on television two days before that he had signed bank documents as Jose Velarde.

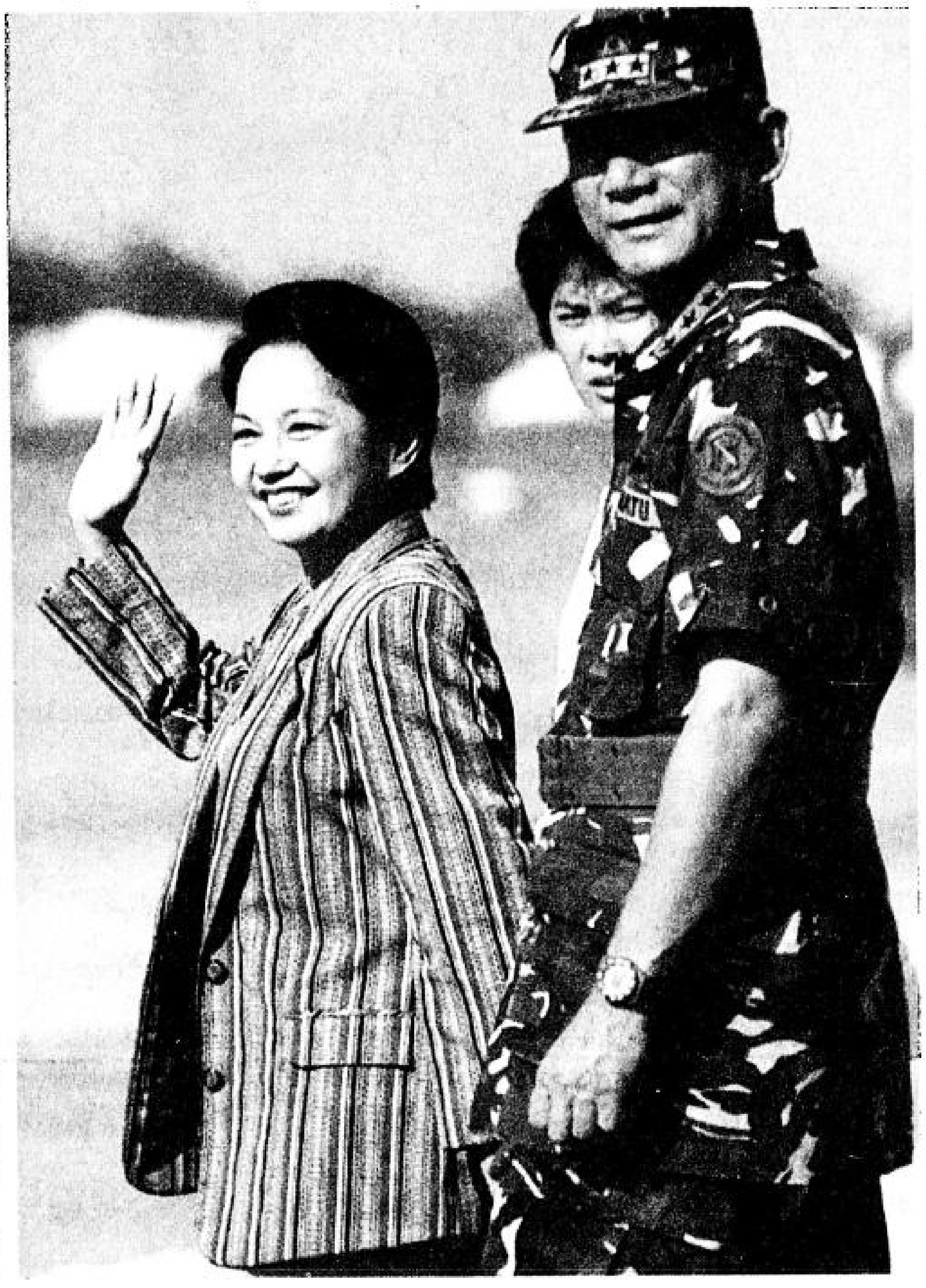
Prosecutors said Estrada signed as Jose Velarde to disguise an account with Equitable PCI Bank, which at one point contained P3.2 billion when Estrada's declared net worth was only P35 million.

Entering the court with a limp, Estrada said he did not enter a plea because of his lawyers' pending petition with the Supreme Court questioning the creation on Jan. 21 of a special Sandiganbayan panel for his criminal cases.

This prompted the anti-graft court to automatically enter a "not guilty" plea for the accused.

Estrada admitted in interviews on Monday and Tuesday that he signed the

ERAP REFUSES/A16



VAL HANDUMON

GLORIA IN ZAMBOANGA
President Macapagal waves to crowd at the Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City. Next stop: Gen. Santos City. Behind her is Southcom chief Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu.

Indon terror suspect admits planning Rizal Day bombings

By Michael Lim Ubac

SUSPECTED Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi yesterday admitted that he masterminded the bloody Rizal Day bombings that killed 22 people and wounded more than a hundred others in Metro Manila over a year ago.

"I knew (the attacks) because I planned it," Al-Ghozi told a panel of prosecutors during a preliminary investigation at the Department of Justice in Manila.

He said the bombings were part of a *jihad* (Islamic holy war) in retaliation for the "all-out war" launched by the Estrada administration against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao in 2000.

Al-Ghozi is believed to have links with the al-Qaida network of Osama bin Laden, primary suspect in the Sept. 21 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States.

He was arrested by members of the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group (PNP-IG) and the Army's Intelligence and Security Group during a raid in Quiapo, Manila, on Jan. 15.

The DOJ conducted a preliminary investigation based on a criminal complaint of multiple murder, multiple frustrated mur-

INDON/A16

Camacho finally gets CA nod

WOOING TESSIE. Estranged Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho moves to patch up things with Urdaneta Village neighbor Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta. ERNIE SARMIENTO

By Rocky Nazareno and Clarissa S. Batino

AFTER an arduous process that included four hearings and an hour-long pre-plenary caucus, the 25-member Commission on Appointments yesterday finally confirmed President Macapagal-Arroyo's man as finance secretary.

"I am so relieved that this is all over and the process was a lot less tense than what people were expecting," Jose Isidro Camacho, a former international banker, declared after his confirmation. "Now I can concentrate on my job."

Raul T. Concepcion, head of the Federation of Philippine Industries, appeared to be no less relieved. "Now we can all go back to business and we can focus on strengthening the economy and help the government create jobs," he said.

Camacho was recently in the eye of

CAMACHO/A4

ANTI-POLIO DRIVE

Int'l health agencies applaud 'General Dayrit'

By Armand N. Nocum

INTERNATIONAL health agencies have lauded Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit for achieving a 98-percent vaccination rate during the first round of the polio-free maintenance immunization campaign earlier this month.

And over at the Department of Health, he is being called "General Dayrit" for marshalling resources and personnel of the DOH and various donor agencies for the campaign.

In fact, the DOH has its own version of the "Balikatan" (the joint Philippine-US military war exercises in Mindanao), with Dayrit leading 68,000 health personnel and volunteers in giving oral polio vaccine to children below 5 years.

"It's like we're doing a Balikatan of our own," quipped a health worker, referring to Dayrit's "door-to-door" polio immunization campaign.

During a forum yesterday, Dayrit said he opted to deviate from the program of his predecessors who had set up fixed Patak Centers. He said more children could be reached in the campaign if health workers and volunteers went to each house.

"Our door-to-door concept was acceptable to the population. People were saying that this was the way public service ought to work," Dayrit said.

In the past, the fixed Patak Centers reached only about 85 percent of the target population, said Myrna Cabotaje, director of the DOH National Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

INT'L/A9

Harsher drugs bill OKd: 99 g of shabu means death

By Cynthia D. Balana

TO SHOW the government's resolve in stamping out the drug menace, the Senate yesterday passed a bill that seeks to punish with lethal injection anyone caught with at least 99 grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride, popularly known as shabu.

Under the present law, the death penalty is imposed only on those found with at least 200 grams of shabu.

The proposed Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, certified by Malacañang as urgent, was approved on second and final reading after only two days of deliberation.

"This bill seeks to provide more teeth to the campaign against the menace of illegal drugs," Senate President Franklin Drilon said.

"Let drug pushers and users be warned that the government will not bend in its resolve to put an end to the scourge of illegal drugs," he added.

The proposed measure also seeks to impose the death penalty on drug users found with at least 500 grams of marijuana or 10 grams of Ecstasy, LSD, opium, morphine, heroin or cocaine.

Under the 30-year-old Dangerous Drugs Act, capital punishment is meted out only to those in possession of at least 750 grams of marijuana.

The present law also does not consider Ecstasy, popular among teenagers, a prohibited drug.

HARSHER/A4

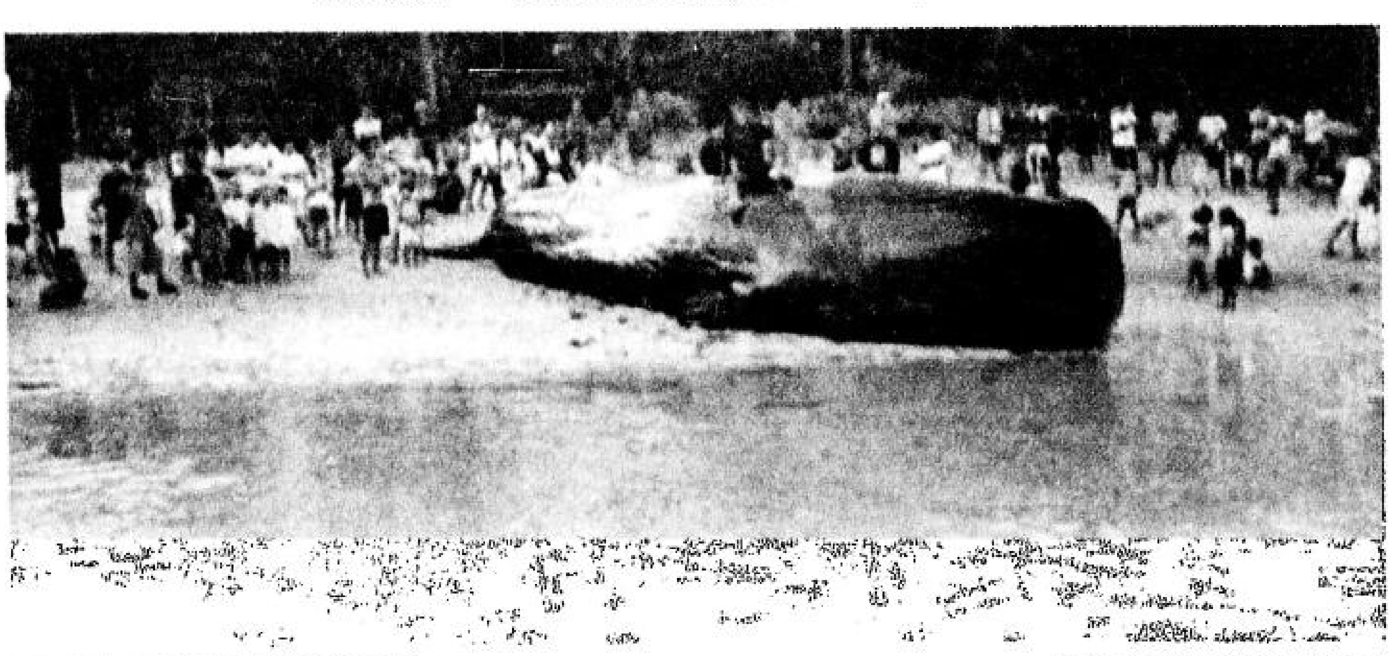


PHOTO COURTESY OF JOMA AGUILAR

WHALE ON MASBATE BEACH
This 5-ton whale arrived on Valentine's Day in San Pascual, Masbate. At first, residents tried to force the beached whale back to deeper waters. Failing that, the townsfolk decided to butcher the sea mammal. *(Story in Across the Nation, Page A15.)*

AYAW NG MAGSASAKA YANI

Second FRONT PAGE

Coco farmers oppose San Miguel-Kirin deal; storm investors' meet

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

MORE than 100 small coconut farmers from the Bicol and Southern Tagalog regions stormed the San Miguel Corp. stockholder's meeting yesterday to oppose the signing of the $540 million Kirin Brewery deal and call for the ouster of SMC chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr.

The farmers—led by the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Bicol Coconut Planters Association Inc. (BCPAI) and the Pinagisang Lakas ng Magbubukid sa Quezon (Piglas-Quezon)—urged the recently installed government representatives to the SMC board to defy President Macapagal-Arroyo's orders to sign the deal. ***(See related story on B1)***

The group also called for the immediate pullout and return of the coco levy funds to genuine small coconut farmers.

On Saturday, Cojuangco and Haydee Yorac, chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, signed an alleged "power sharing" deal that would allow Cojuangco to remain as SMC chair for another two years.

'A compromise'

KMP chair Rafael Mariano said the SMC-Kirin deal and the power-sharing agreement constituted a "political compromise" between the President and Cojuangco.

"Ms Macapagal is obviously laying the groundwork for a power sharing with plunderers even beyond 2004," he said.

Mariano warned that the agreement with Cojuangco had weakened and imperiled the government's position and pursuit of numerous civil cases against Cojuangco and in the battle for the immediate recovery of the coco levy funds.

"The motive behind the appointment of farmer representatives in the UCPB is to pacify and silence the small coconut farmers who are opposing the deal," Mariano said.

The KMP said the small coconut farmers' hopes of recovering the coco levy funds from Cojuangco had dimmed under the Macapagal administration.

"Instead of working for the immediate return of the funds to small coconut farmers, Ms Macapagal has strengthened Cojuangco's monopoly and control over the funds," Mariano said.

Oust Cojuangco

Mariano said Cojuangco's ouster from SMC must be the first step that the newly installed SMC government representatives on the board should take to recover the coco levy funds.

Yorac has clarified that the "interim agreement" with Cojuangco was not a compromise agreement as all criminal and civil cases against the Marcos crony will continue to be litigated by the government.

She also clarified that there was no voting-trust agreement in the SMC-Kirin deal. She said Kirin was not obliged to vote along with Cojuangco on SMC matters, as originally agreed upon with Cojuangco when the buyin was first negotiated.

If there is disagreement and the matter is not resolved, the status quo would be maintained, the PCGG has said.

Not happy

Some farmers' groups are also unhappy with the appointment to the United Coconut Planters Bank board of two directors who came from non-government organizations claiming to represent the interest of coconut farmers.

Dionelo Suante, chair of the Kalipunan ng Maliliit na Magniniyog sa Pilipinas and of the Aklan Coconut Farmers Association, said new UCPB directors Romeo Royandoyan and Joey Faustino did not deserve to be appointed because they were "pseudo farmer representatives" and self-proclaimed farmers' leaders.

Suante said the appointment of the two was another "swindle perpetrated on small coconut farmers."

Suante's group is affiliated with the Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Samahan ng mga Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan (PKSMMN).

Royandoyan heads the Philippine Peasant Institute, a research organization, while Faustino is the executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR).

Both had opposed a settlement with Cojuangco that the PKSMMN had pushed and which had been aborted. The deal called for the unfreezing of P50 billion worth of SMC coconut levy fund shares to be turned into a perpetual trust fund for coconut farmers.

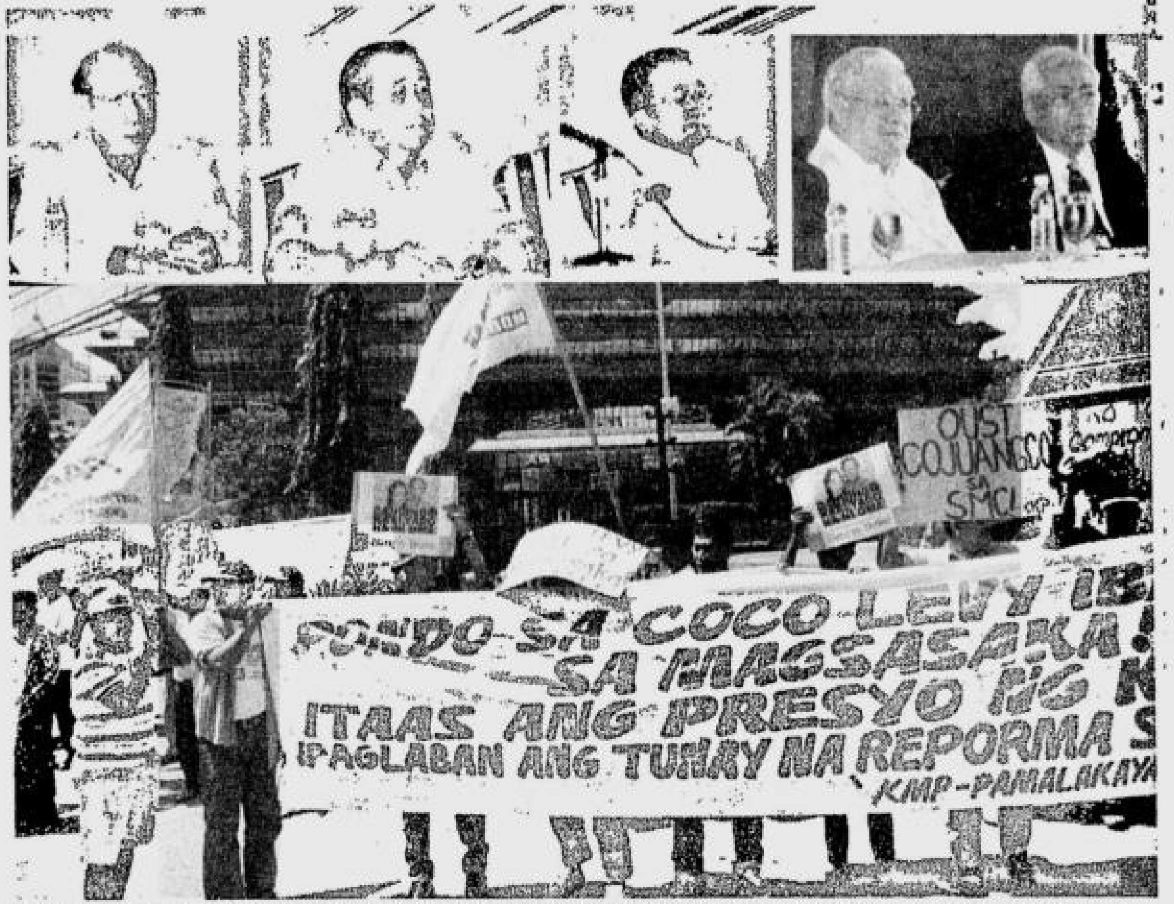
Rights victims, too

Meanwhile, the Filipino lawyer of some 10,000 Marcos human rights abuse victims yesterday also questioned the deal that would allow Cojuangco to continue to chair SMC.

Rod Domingo Jr. criticized Yorac for entering into a deal with Cojuangco and not entertaining any compromise agreement with the Marcoses that he said would benefit the human rights victims.

He claimed that a compromise offer from Marcos lawyer James Linn that would allow the human rights victims to take control of the $30 million Arelma funds which Yorac had rejected would have allowed the PCGG to withdraw a portion of the escrow account without any strings attached.

"Linn was not able to get to first base," Domingo said. ***With a report from Donna S. Cueto***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SA MAGSASAKA!
ITAAS ANG PRESYO NG K
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KMP-PAMALAKAYA

THE FIVE new government appointees to the SMC board attended their first meeting yesterday, from left, Juan V. Santos, Hector Hofileña, Leo Alvez, Pacifico Fajardo and Menardo Jimenez. In bottom photo, members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas protested the stockholders' meeting in behalf of the coconut farmers who own at least 27 percent of San Miguel.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

American planes flying spy missions over Mindanao?

By Christine O. Avendaño and Carlito Pablo

BAYAN Muna Rep. Crispin Beltran said yesterday that he will ask Congress to investigate the reported arrival of US spy planes in Mindanao, which could be a violation of agreements between Manila and Washington.

The resolution to be filed by Beltran calling for a House inquiry was in reaction to a recent Washington Post article that quoted a US senior official as saying the US military has begun undisclosed intelligence-gathering flights over Mindanao.

The Feb. 21, 2002 article titled "Spy planes seek out Philippine guerrillas: US steps up role against terrorists linked to al-Qaida," implied that the flights, which were being conducted by US Navy and Air Force aircraft based in Okinawa, were being done without the knowledge and approval of Philippine authorities.

"The Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 and the Visiting Forces Agreement of 1999 do not contain any provisions allowing the entry of US military aircraft into Philippine airspace without the consent of the Philippine government," Beltran said in a statement.

He said last week's crash of an MH-47 Chinook helicopter "drew attention to the possibility that the US military forces in the country were conducting operations and activities unrelated to the Balikatan 02-1 joint military exercises and its supposed goal of helping the AFP defeat the terrorist Abu Sayyaf group."

New models

The entry, too, of new models of Black Hawk helicopters, Beltran said, "implies the US means serious business."

Combat Pave Hawk helicopters have replaced the Chinooks, which were indefinitely grounded after a crash that killed 10 US servicemen in Negros Oriental last week.

Brig. Gen. Donald Wurster, co-training director for Balikatan 02-1, dismissed speculations, however, that the arrival of two HH60Gs, a variant of the Black Hawk series known as the Pave Hawks, signaled the start of the US rescue effort for Martin and Gracia Burnham and the start of military operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

Wurster said the Pave Hawks will only be used for the re-supply and movement of the American forces.

He said it would also be used for search and recovery, not of the American hostages, but for remnants of the Chinook that crashed off Zamboanguita town on Friday.

Replace Chinooks

Maj. Cynthia Terame, spokesperson of the Combined Information Bureau for the Balikatan, said the new aircraft would take the place of the Chinooks, which were used to deploy US servicemen and logistics in Basilan.

"These aircraft will support the search and recovery operation for the aircraft that was lost at sea. The Pave Hawks will be here for a few weeks and will also support air ambulance operations," Terame said.

Col. Danilo Servando, spokesperson of the AFP Southern Command, said that despite its combat use, the Pave Hawks will not be used against the Abu Sayyaf.

Cimatu said US crash investigation experts arrived on Tuesday and were expected to immediately start their work.

Terame said the investigating team came from Fort Rucker in Alabama, from the Headquarters of the Air Force Special Operations Command in Hurlbert Field in Florida and from Seoul.

Return to US

The Chinooks and Black Hawks that are coming to the Philippines will be going back to the US after the Balikatan 02-1, however.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the special helicopters are not included in the military equipment the US is expected to turn over to the Philippine government after the six-month Balikatan exercise.

"Not these, because these choppers are too sophisticated," Golez said in an interview over radio dzMM.

"General Wurster pointed to some electronic equipment, particularly for communications (that could be given to us)," Golez said. "He told me there's a big chance that after they train our troops on how to use these, the equipment will be turned over to us after the training exercise."

Two Black Hawks have been transported to Zamboanga City apparently as replacements for the MH-47 Chinook that crashed into the Bohol Sea on Feb. 22, presumably killing all the 10 American servicemen on board.

Donations

The US recently donated four reconditioned choppers to the Philippines, which will be outfitted later with night sensors to be used for night flying exercises.

The Philippine government is also counting on the turnover of modern assault and sniper rifles and night vision goggles for ground troops.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said she is confident the joint exercise will lead to the rescue of the remaining Abu Sayyaf hostages, namely the American couple Martin and Gracia Burnham, Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap in Basilan, and Roland Ulah in Sulu. ***Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

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Officials agree to lower 'launder' law amount to get off int'l blacklist

By Juliet L. Javellana

CONGRESS and monetary officials have agreed to amend the barely implemented Anti-Money Laundering Law to satisfy the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) into finally removing the country from its money-laundering blacklist.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura met yesterday with Speaker Jose de Venecia and Rep. Jaime Lopez, chair of the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries.

The officials agreed the P4 million threshold on accounts to be investigated should be lowered to P1 million or P500,000 to bring this in consonance with international standards.

Republic Act 9160, the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001, provides that banks and other financial institutions report only bank transactions that exceed P4 million.

The threshold was reportedly unacceptable to the FATF because it was considered too high and a major loophole in the law seeking to prevent and penalize money laundering.

The monetary and congressional officials agreed that a threshold of between P500,000 and P1 million ($10,000 to $20,000) would be acceptable.

RA 9160 was enacted last year to beat the Sept. 30, 2001 deadline imposed by the FATF for 19 "uncooperative" countries seen as allowing money laundering operations.

The countries on the list were to face financial sanctions if they failed to enact the necessary anti-money laundering laws.

Despite the enactment of RA 9160, the Philippines remained on the FATF blacklist.

"The FATF noted that the Philippines enacted the anti-money laundering act but there were still deficiencies that needed to be remedied before we could consider any form of delisting," Claire Lo, FATF president, was quoted as saying in Hong Kong.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday said she would support proposed amendments to the anti-money laundering law to make the Philippine banking system inhospitable to questionable funds.

Ms Macapagal said her financial advisers have met with FATF representatives and they told her the body had "some suggestions regarding the cutoff amount." She did not elaborate.

Asked if she would support moves to amend the law, Ms Macapagal said, "Yeah, (but) not because of the FATF but because we really want to catch the money laundering terrorists and drug syndicates."

The FATF, the financial watchdog of the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation, had asked Manila to lower the P4 million (about $77,000) threshold under which suspect accounts could be pried open.

It also recommended that a special anti-money laundering agency be given broader powers to look into bank deposits.

The Philippines has been trying to get off the FATF blacklist of countries seen as not doing enough to combat money laundering by criminal syndicates and terrorist organizations.

The group had threatened to impose sanctions against Manila if it failed to improve its law. ***With an AFP report***

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Malaysia cracks down on illegal Pinoys, destroying their homes

KUALA LUMPUR—Thousands of Filipinos were arrested and hundreds of their homes destroyed in a major crackdown on illegal immigrants and armed militants seeking refuge in the East Malaysian state of Sabah on Borneo Island, police said yesterday.

In simultaneous raids across the state, 2,548 illegal immigrants, including women and children, were rounded up on Tuesday to be deported.

Bulldozers rolled in to destroy more than 200 squatter homes as part of the biggest operation against immigrants in years, which comes against a backdrop of tightened rules against foreign workers and the arrest of Islamic militants suspected of plotting terrorism.

Those arrested, mostly Filipinos and Indonesians, were being held in detention camps and would be deported as soon as possible, a police spokesperson said.

"We will send them back, but it's not the end. Operations will be ongoing indefinitely. When we stop depends on how fast we can flush them out," he said.

He said the crackdown also was also aimed at weeding out armed militant groups, especially from the Philippines, which were trying to set up bases in the state's squatter colonies.

"Our main task is concentrating on illegals, but in between if we find criminal or militant elements, we will also act swiftly," he said.

Nearly 4,000 policemen, soldiers and other officials are involved in the massive operation to screen an estimated 600,000 immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia, many of them without valid papers.

The massive clampdown followed the government's announcement last month that it planned to deport 30,000 illegals from the state "as soon as possible."

Sabah chief minister Chong Kah Kiat said the move was long overdue, and called on political and community leaders to support the crackdown to resolve the longstanding problem of illegal immigrants.

"We are prepared to become unpopular among certain groups over the issue," Chong was quoted as saying by Sabah's "The Star" newspaper.

State police chief Ramli Yusuff said police and army personnel would set up camps in neighborhoods with large populations of foreign nationals to prevent those deported from returning.

Thousands of Filipinos have lived in Sabah for decades after fleeing from a prolonged Muslim separatist insurgency in restive Mindanao.

Among the areas targeted by authorities was Gaya island, where thousands of immigrants live in dilapidated wooden huts and work as laborers on mainland Sabah.

The resource-rich state lies on the northeastern tip of Borneo island, south of Mindanao.

A lesser number of Indonesians seeking to escape poverty back home also work and live in Sabah.

Malaysia has beefed up security in its territorial waters with the Philippines recently, following an upsurge in violence in Mindanao.

The Philippine military put down a bloody revolt by supporters of renegade Moro leader Nur Misuari in November, and are being assisted by US troops to destroy another group, the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf.

In 2000, Abu Sayyaf gunmen twice crossed into Malaysian waters and kidnapped tourists and workers at beach resorts for ransom.

Malaysia has announced a series of measures to reduce the number of immigrants from neighboring Indonesia—who form the majority of legal and illegal foreign workers here—following a riot by Indonesian workers at a textile factory in January.

The pro-government "New Straits Times" newspaper said in an editorial on Sunday that Indonesia's lax border controls enabled illegal workers and Islamic militants to travel easily from one country to another, posing a security risk to Southeast Asia.

Indonesia's neighbors, Malaysia and Singapore, have arrested dozens of suspected Islamic militants, thought to be linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network, believed to be involved in an alleged plot to blow up US targets in Singapore. ***AP and AFP***

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Cardinal got it all wrong, gays aver

By Agnes E. Donato and Carlito Pablo

ARCHBISHOP Jaime Cardinal Sin was wrong to attack a House bill that he had mistakenly thought promoted gay marriages, the Progressive Organization of Gays (ProGay) said yesterday.

"As a poor gay man, I am deeply hurt when Cardinal Sin trivialized the rights and welfare of marginalized gay people, as if issues of poverty are not our issues, too," ProGay president Oscar Atadero said.

In his sermon at the Mass commemorating the Edsa I anniversary on Monday, Sin said there were more important issues for Congress to tackle than same-sex marriage.

But in Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she was supporting the bill and was not at all worried that lawmakers might consider legalizing same-sex marriages as other European countries have done.

"I don't think that it (same sex-marriage proposals) will go very far in Congress, anyway," Ms Macapagal said.

House Bill 2051, according to its sponsor Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, aims to protect the rights of homosexuals and to prevent their being discriminated against.

She explained that a provision on "domestic partnership" sought to govern "property relations between gays and lesbians" but did not advocate same-sex marriage.

Ms Macapagal noted that homosexuals in the country were not really that concerned about same-sex marriage.

"For me, what is more important for gays is that they are not discriminated against in the workplace," Ms Macapagal said.

Atendido said the bill was simply seeking to create a desk at the Philippine Commission on Human Rights to handle complaints of abuse and discrimination against homosexuals.

He said discrimination served to aggravate homosexuals' poverty-related problems.

"Just like peasants, workers and women, we gays are exploited. We suffer unemployment and are forced to take humiliating jobs abroad," he said.

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NDF threatens to try captured gov't agents

By G. Lacuarta

THE COMMUNIST-LED National Democratic Front threatened yesterday to subject to a "court-martial" four captured government intelligence agents because of the military's stepped-up operations in southern Mindanao despite ongoing negotiations for their release.

Luis Jalandoni, chair of the NDF negotiating panel, said the escalation was happening in the very areas where the NDF has called for the suspension of offensive military operations to ensure the safe and orderly release of "prisoners 'of war.'" "The (Macapagal-Arroyo) regime acts in bad faith, taking advantage of sincere efforts of third parties for the release of the POWs and the NDF's readiness to release them on humanitarian grounds," Jalandoni said.

Camacho finally gets CA nod: 'I am so relieved'

From page A1

the storm in connection with his alleged complicity in the issuance of zero coupon bonds that benefited the Caucus of Development-NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) chaired by his sister Ma. Socorro Reyes.

Critics alleged that because of his influence, CODE-NGO was given special favors like exemption from paying 20-percent withholding tax plus reserve and asset eligibility from the central bank and the Insurance Commission.

Both Camacho and Reyes have denied any wrongdoing.

Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta, who had earlier opposed Camacho's confirmation, yesterday said at the Commission on Appointments' plenary session that she was no longer posing an objection "in line with the Senate minority's commitment to the greater good of the greatest number."

"Allowing Secretary Camacho's confirmation to pass is in keeping with the critical cooperation that we, in the Senate minority, have been extending to the Macapagal-Arroyo administration," she said.

But she added that this was "without prejudice" to her "continued active participation" in the Senate investigation of the P35 billion worth of Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificates (PEACe) cornered by CODE-NGO.

In his speech sponsoring Camacho's confirmation, Sen. Ralph Recto said the finance secretary was "the best man for the job."

"We owe Mr. Camacho our verdict because he has run the gauntlet that is the CA (Commission on Appointments)," the senator said.

But Oreta said Camacho's competence was not the issue. "What bears close scrutiny ... is the moral fiber of the nominee, the issue of character that we in the (CA) must never take lightly or dismiss in cavalier fashion ..." she said.

Happy

Camacho said he had been prepared to accept as part of the process the supposed plan of some members of the opposition to delay his confirmation by invoking Section 20.

"I am happy that there was no objection to my appointment and that the fear of some people that Section 20 would be invoked also did not push through," he said.

Section 20 is the non-debatable motion to remand the nomination to the committee involved.

The CA finance committee recommended Camacho's confirmation last Feb. 11 on a vote of 14-1-1.

Asked whether Malacañang had pulled strings to get him confirmed without any objection, Camacho said: "I really don't know, but I am just very glad."

Donald Dee, president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, and Sergio Ortiz-Luis, head of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc., expressed gladness over Camacho's confirmation.

"We are elated," Dee said. "At least we know that we have a good man in the DOF (Department of Finance) who is accepted and respected by the local and foreign business communities."

Recto said "all chambers of commerce in the country," as well as "cooperatives, professional associations and labor groups," had been batting for Camacho's confirmation.

"The CA was swamped with pleas from Ilocos Norte to Jolo that he be confirmed," Recto said.

Other CA members, Sen. Renato Cayetano and Representatives Raul del Mar and Clavel Martinez, both of Cebu, aired similar observations.

"Never have I seen such solid support from our industry leaders," Del Mar said. "And they were here not only during the plenary session but even in the hearings."

'Not obstructionist'

CAMACHO: "Now I can concentrate on my job." ERNIE SARMIENTO

Saying that she was not an "obstructionist legislator," Oreta read a prepared four-page statement to explain why she had earlier opposed Camacho's confirmation.

"It was my right as a duly elected legislator and my duty as a member of this commission to check if, as claimed by his own admirers, (Camacho) has indeed 'conducted his life and work in the highest standards of ethics and values,'" she said.

She pointed out that Camacho "virtually admitted" during her earlier questioning that there were "three smoking guns pointing to his direct involvement in the negotiations between CODE-NGO and government agencies under the DOF."

"CODE-NGO, through its agent-bank Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., had netted a cool P1.8 billion without investing anything in this government-securities transaction administered by the DOF—save for the saliva and the amazing government connections of (Camacho's) sister and her pals in civil society," Oreta said.

Camacho said he was hoping that he would be able to convince legislators, particularly the members of the Senate committee on finance, that the PEACe bonds transaction was aboveboard.

"I understand that the PEACe bonds investigation is an independent process, and Senator Oreta said she would continue to pursue it," he said. "I hope I can finally convince them that the government acted with integrity and that it was not disadvantaged in this transaction."

In an earlier interview, Camacho said he was hurting from the accusations hurled at him in relation to the PEACe bonds.

"These accusations tend to destroy the reputation that I built in the last 22 years that I have worked as a banker," he said. "But I carry on with the support I've been getting. Plus I know I've been doing a good job and can do much more."

Camacho also said he was not even "particularly close" to his sister.

"We do not even talk much, so I cannot recall if there was an instance that she contacted me to ask for help in designing the bonds," he said.

Camacho insisted he had inhibited himself from decision-making in relation to the PEACe bonds.

But Sen. John Osmeña said that Camacho's supposed inhibition was a "poor sham."

Harsher drugs bill OKd: 99 g of shabu means death

From page A1

The proposed measure also seeks to impose a fine ranging from P500,000 to P10 million on major offenders.

A total of 18 senators voted in favor of the bill. Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., an opponent of the death penalty, voted against the measure but later withdrew his vote.

Senators Joker Arroyo, Francis Pangilinan and Ralph Recto abstained from the voting, saying they favored the bill but opposed the death penalty.

"Had we voted for the bill, it would appear we are also for the death penalty that we can never adhere to," Arroyo said.

"On the other hand, if we voted against the bill, it would look like we are against the Dangerous Drugs Act which we are in favor of," he added.

Barbers

Sen. Robert Barbers, principal sponsor of the measure, stressed that the trafficking and use of illegal drugs constituted a heinous crime that should be meted the capital punishment.

Barbers said the Senate and the House of Representatives would soon meet to reconcile their versions of the bill.

He said he expected the final version to impose the death penalty on possession of a much lower quantity of illegal drugs.

"Ninety-nine grams for shabu, I believe, is still high and needs to be lowered because more and more people are getting engaged in selling this kind of illegal drug," Barbers said.

The Senate version of the bill also proposed the creation of a Presidential Drug Enforcement Agency.

Drilon said the proposed agency would have similar duties, powers and structure as the Drug Enforcement Agency of the United States.

The Senate bill likewise called for the destruction or burning of shabu and other illegal drugs within 24 hours from seizure.

This is to ensure that the seized drugs are not resold, according to Drilon.

"There have been cases where seized drugs get lost or are stolen by some scalawags in the police force," he said. "We also want to ensure that seized drugs are not recycled in the market."

Cuenco

At the House, Rep. Antonio Cuenco said the Philippines had been ranked as No. 1 shabu trafficking and manufacturing center in the Asia-Pacific region.

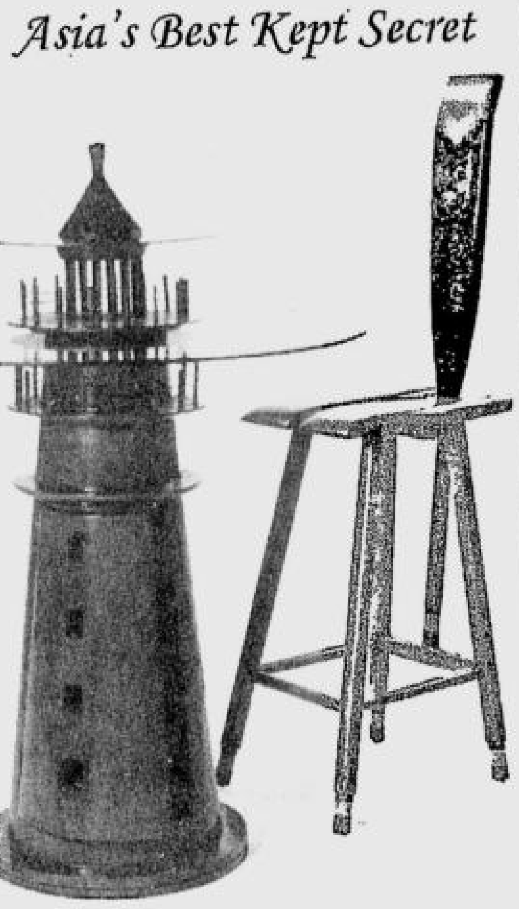
"The Philippines is the No. 1 country in the Asia-Pacific region where shabu is trafficked and produced," he said, citing a report made by the United Nations.

Cuenco, chair of the House committee on drugs, said a UN representative assigned in the Asia-Pacific region presented the report during a conference on dangerous drugs at the Department of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday.

"He said that the Philippines has become a major drug transshipment and production center," he told reporters.

Quoting the UN representative, Cuenco also disclosed that there were 4 million drug users in the country, contrary to police reports that there are only 1.8 million.

Cuenco, together with Representatives Nerissa Ruiz and Lorna Silverio, made a visit to the PNP crime laboratory in Camp Crame, Quezon City, and inspected the laboratory's facilities, including the storage of confiscated drugs.



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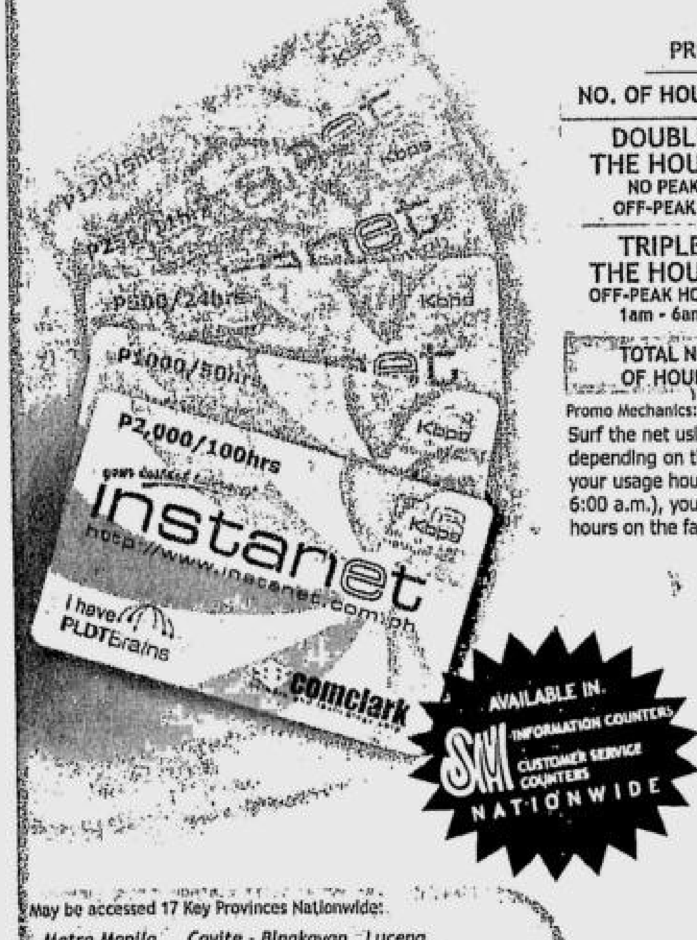

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Gloria won't stop AFP chief from retiring

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday she would not block Gen. Diomedio Villanueva's retirement as Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff in May when he reaches the mandatory retirement age of 56.

President Macapagal said Villanueva's situation was different from that of Philippine National Police Director General Leandro Mendoza's, who was supposed to retire this March but whose term she extended for nine months.

"The reason I extended Mendoza's term is because the next in command is Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. who is still very young, so his appointment will not be jeopardized," said Ms Macapagal, referring to the chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force.

Ebdane, a member of Class '70 of the Philippine Military Academy, is not due to retire until 2004.

"In the case of Villanueva, many of those next in line to him are nearing retirement age so if he gets extended, they will lose their chance (at being chief of staff)," she said.

This early, the betting is the top military post will go to Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu, chief of the Southern Command who is directly on top of the current campaign against the Abu Sayyaf.

Cimatu, a member of PMA Class '70, is due to retire in July 2002. Asked if Cimatu will be the next AFP chief of staff, Ms Macapagal simply smiled.

When reminded by Palace reporters that she had said on a previous occasion that Cimatu was her choice, Ms Macapagal replied: "Really? I don't remember."

Villanueva, however, yesterday welcomed the decision of President Macapagal not to grant him an extension of his term.

In a message relayed to defense reporters, Villanueva said the President's decision would give others a chance to lead the military organization.

"I welcome the decision of the President. I'm satisfied with my military career and I can't ask for anything more," he said.

"It's okay for me to retire to give a chance to others, those next in line. I would like to give more attention to my family. After retirement, I'll concentrate on farming," he added.

Villanueva was born on May 20, 1946 in Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. He entered the Philippine Military Academy in 1964.

Theoretically, the candidates for chief of staff include the senior brass and the heads of the major service and regional commands.

But Army chief Lt. Gen. Jaime de los Santos, for one, is retiring in April ahead of Villanueva.

Air Force commanding general Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor is retiring in September, but President Macapagal is reportedly "uncomfortable" with Defensor, possibly because he is the brother of former opposition Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Navy flag officer-in-command Rear Adm. Victorino Hingco is retiring in March 2003 but is not considered a serious contender because, for one, he is not a PMA graduate.

Second in command to Villanueva is Lt. Gen. Gregorio Camiling, a member of PMA Class 1969 like Defensor and De los Santos. But Camiling was yanked out as Southcom chief after the debacle in Lamitan, Basilan, last year where surrounded Abu Sayyaf bandits were able to slip through a military cordon.

QUICK RESPONSE. Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes (left) marvels at the rappelling skills of a member of the newly activated Disaster Response Co. (DRC) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines based in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. The DRC will be at the forefront of disaster response operations during calamities in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 28, 2002
3rd Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: 2 S 5:1-7, 10
Gospel: Mk 3:22-30

The teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is in the power of Beelzebul: the chief of the demons helps him to drive out demons."

Jesus called them to him and began teaching them by means of stories or parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a nation is divided by civil war, that nation cannot stand. If a family divides itself into groups, that family will not survive. In the same way, if Satan has risen against himself and is divided, he will not stand; he is finished. No one can break into the house of the Strong one in order to plunder his goods, unless he first ties up the Strong one. Then indeed, he can plunder his house.

Truly, I say to you, every sin will be forgiven humankind, even insults to God, however numerous. But whoever slanders the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven: he carries the guilt of his sin forever."

This was their sin when they said, "He has an evil spirit in him."

Commentary

Masters of the Law saw the good works performed by Jesus, but denied that God was behind them. They would prefer to attribute the new way of teaching and miracles of Jesus to some other powers, even to Satan, the common enemy, rather than to surrender to the evidence that Jesus and God were one. The worst blindness is that of these who do not want to see. The worst sin is to deny that the Spirit of God is at work in the world.

How difficult is to accept that others, who are not of our social or religious group, can do better than us! When we fail to recognize the good existing in the world, or the good deeds performed by those who are not of our company, we are denying God.

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OPINION

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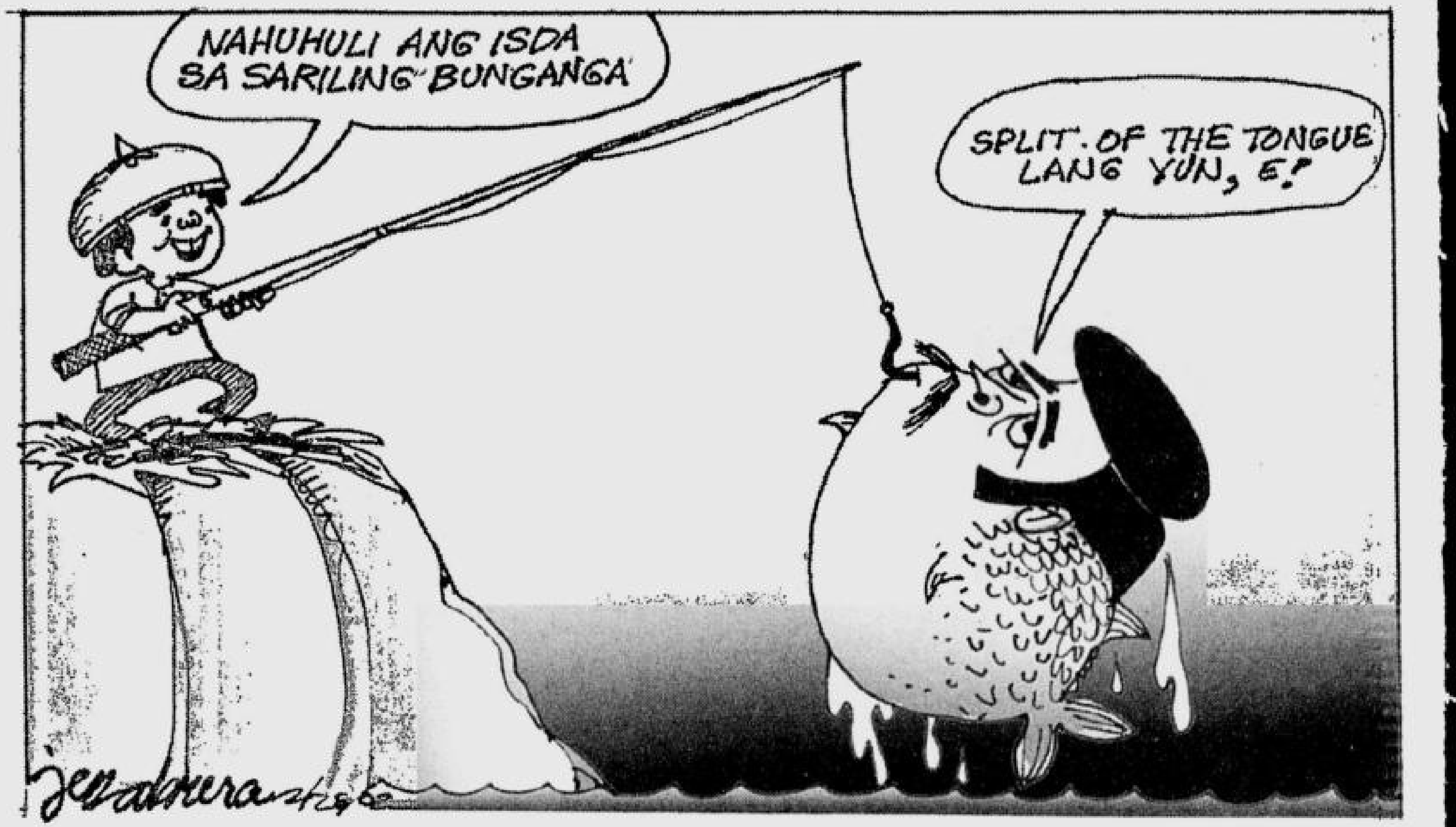
NAHUHULI ANG ISDA SA SARILING BUNGANGA
SPLIT OF THE TONGUE LANG YUN, E!

A different twist

EDITORIAL

FORMER PRESIDENTS Corazon Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos have added their voices to that of Jaime Cardinal Sin in calling for restraint in the use of people power to unseat unpopular leaders. "We have used people power once too often to oust our (offending) presidents," Aquino said at the ceremonies marking the 16th anniversary of the 1986 People Power Revolution. "Let us not make a habit of this."

For his part, Ramos made a pitch for a return to political institutions as the channels for change, so as to allow democracy to mature.

The fact that Sin, Aquino and Ramos were key leaders who sparked the first people power uprising and were influential in the mass mobilization to topple then President Joseph Estrada only serves to underscore their concern over the specter raised by the overuse of people power. Their call for restraint was no doubt influenced by the fact that the class war theme expounded by Estrada has awakened a new mass constituency composed of the urban poor that can be manipulated to attack a sitting government.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in her speech during the commemoration of People Power I last Monday, apparently got a similar message from the May 1 uprising. She has given a new twist to people power. She wants people power redirected toward the fight against poverty. "The new people power's enemy will not be a dictatorial regime or a corrupt government," she said. "The new people power's enemy is the scourge of poverty."

The first two people power movements were political movements seeking political change. Ms Macapagal is now giving the movement an economic and social accent.

In her first State of the Nation Address last July, the President outlined a program of poverty alleviation with limited objectives, including the creation of jobs among the young in urban centers, mainly Metro Manila. The limited objectives stemmed from scarce financial resources amid a huge fiscal deficit and sluggish economic growth.

Although the President has calmed unrest in the urban poor communities, there is widespread skepticism among the poor over whether she can achieve her limited goals in the anti-poverty drive. The poor, to say the least, are giving her a chance to improve their lot. Not much has been done for them, except setting targets for anti-poverty programs, during her first year in office, and unless there is a significant infusion of resources into these programs, she cannot win this constituency to her side.

The meager economic growth inhibits pumping of resources into anti-poverty programs. A February 2002 study by Asian Development Bank economists Arsenio Baliscan and Ernesto Pernia says that "while growth is indeed good for the poor, it is not good enough."

The paper identifies the directions government must take to make a dent on poverty. It says that other variables than growth have direct impacts on the well-being of the poor. If these variables are omitted, "their impacts would be wrongly attributed to growth."

For example, the paper points out, local infrastructure, institutions and agrarian structure "vary considerably across provinces and correlate strongly with provincial mean incomes." It says such variables as schooling, investment in infrastructure and changes in incentives (the price of agricultural products relative to the price of goods in other sectors of the local economy) "have a profound impact on poverty reduction." This is related to the fact that poverty in the country "is a largely rural phenomenon." Among the rural poor, nearly two-thirds are dependent on agriculture for employment and income.

These findings point to the areas on which the administration should lay emphasis, if its anti-poverty program is to achieve maximum impact. At present, the program is biased for the urban poor, and that is because the administration is giving priority to political stability.

The adverse effect of local politics did not escape the notice from the ADB economists. They note that lack of political competition due to political dynasties "hurts the lower-income groups, particularly the poorest" because dynasties adversely affect economic efficiency "and, consequently, local economic growth, thereby restricting the access of the poor to basic services and goods."

There remains much to be done by way of economic reorientation and political reforms before the administration can deliver concrete results in its limited war on [illegible]

Another costly scam in garbage contract?

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE CONTROVERSIES over the Piatco contract and the PEACe bonds are not yet over but here comes another controversial contract, the most expensive so far. This is the contract between Jancom Environment Corp. and the government through the Presidential Task Force on Solid Waste Management. It will cost P390 billion (that's billion, not million) and it will charge each household in Metro Manila P600 a month for the collection of garbage! The residents will pay much more for garbage they throw away than for the all-important, life-giving water they need.

Jancom will dispose of the garbage but it is the contract that is garbage, according to the CNN-APC (Citizen's National Network Against Poverty and Corruption), a coalition of NGOs.

At a forum yesterday at the Ciudad Fernandina in Greenhills, the CNN-APC said that two presidents, Fidel V. Ramos and Joseph Estrada, refused to sign the contract because, among many other reasons, it violates five of our laws, the most important of which are the Clean Air Act (RA 8749) and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003). Jancom will dispose of the garbage through incineration—which is prohibited by law—not in landfills. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo does not want to sign it either.

But now the Supreme Court has upheld (erroneously, according to critics) the validity of the contract which decision is being used to compel President Macapagal to sign the defective Jancom garbage contract.

In its decision, the Court's Third Division set a dangerous precedent: that a signed contract takes precedence over any of the pertinent laws that it may or has already violated. In other words, any government official can sign an illegal contract because the contract itself will make it legal.

Jancom's proposed incineration technology has been declared as against the Clean Air Act and was rejected by the Environment Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The project was rejected thrice by the Investment Coordinating Council of the National Economic and Development Authority (ICC-Neda) under three presidents, most recently on Nov. 21, 2001.

The bidding held by the Metro Manila Development Authority was "rigged," as documented by former CORD-NCR Chair Dionisio de la Serna in a confidential memo to President Ramos. Jancom also failed to abide by the requirements of RA 7718 (the Build-Operate-Transfer Law).

The most glaring fraud, CNN-APC said, are the major deviations from the original bid proposal that will raise the tipping fee from $10 per ton to $119 per ton. The original bid asked for a fee of only $10 per ton, but the signed contract pegged the tipping fee at $59 per ton. Compounded by various incremental costs, the tipping fee will rise to $119 per ton. The original project cost rose 142 percent, from $156 million to $377.5 million. In pesos, the overprice alone would balloon to a staggering P377 billion to P390 billion in 25 years. That's enough to build 535,714 classrooms, 1.6 million low-cost homes, 300,000 kilometers of barangay roads, or buy 316 million sacks of rice.

But the Supreme Court's decision, penned by Associate Justice Jose A.R. Melo, who is retiring, ruled that "a meeting of the minds" of the contracting parties is sufficient to "cure" any of the contract's defects.

The Clean Air Act bans incinerators, which is what Jancom will use. But the Supreme Court decision encroached on the legislative powers of Congress by interpreting the ban on incinerators as "not absolute." This is judicial legislation.

There are other legal defects, the most curious of which is this: The winning bidder is Jancom International Pty. Limited of Australia, but Jancom Environment Corp. (JEC), a supposed local subsidiary of the partners of Jancom of Australia, signed the contract. Jancom International assigned JEC to enter into a contract with the MMDA, not with the Task Force on Waste Management.

On Feb. 5, 2001 and again on July 27, 2001, Jancom International wrote Malacañang to disown JEC, warning the government not to negotiate with any unauthorized representative. At present, JEC is in a legal tussle with Jancom International as to the true owners of JEC.

Who could be behind the lobby that made the contract, despite its many defects, hurdle the Supreme Court's Third Division? The CNN-APC mentions four lawyers who currently hold key government positions, although it presented no conclusive evidence.

1. Associate Justice Antonio Carpio is a member of the Supreme Court's Third Division, though he inhibited himself from the Jancom case. He admitted being a former counsel of Jancom's foreign partner, Vivendi (which owns 80 percent of Jancom).

2. Solicitor General Simeon Marcelo and the Office of the Solicitor General fought against the Jancom contract in the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. The OSG lost in both courts.

3. Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz will recommend to the President approval of the contract.

4. Lawyer Pancho Villaraza is President Macapagal's long-time personal lawyer.

All four, according to CNN-APC, "were once affiliated with the law firm Carpio, Villaraza, Cruz Law Office."

My advice to President Macapagal: Look very well before you leap.

Guitar man

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THAT was a poignant story in "Across the Nation" last weekend, the one that told the story of guitar-making in Cebu dying a slow death. The reason for it being that it pays so little.

"I want my children to have a better life," says a veteran guitar-maker named Basilio. So he has decided not to pass on the skills he has learned over a lifetime to his children. Most of whom have shown little interest in the craft anyway. Most prefer working in factories, or abroad as overseas Filipino workers.

Well, in its own quiet way, it's the passing of an era. I also felt this way many years ago when I read about farming becoming a dying craft, or occupation. Many farmers were saying the same thing: They wanted their children to have a better life, and so were not passing on the lore they had learned over the years to them. They would rather their children took up another profession. Many sold their lands hoping their children, or they themselves, would get a crack at working abroad.

But I'm especially dismayed to learn that guitar-making is dying in this country because I love guitars. Nothing beats the sound of a guitar being strummed or plucked, an acoustic one best of all. It has a romance all its own. That is the reason I loathe the karaoke, that contraption having replaced the guitar as an accompaniment to people singing. A great deal of warmth and spontaneity has been lost there. It should signal as well the dying of guitar-playing as a popular art in this country. In my time, it wasn't just seminarians who could play either basketball or the guitar, or both. It was almost everybody. Most of the neighborhoods had at least one good guitar-player who accompanied the *istambays* in the corner store while they caterwauled the night away, fortified with firewater.

When I was a boy, I had the good fortune to know a guitar-maker. It wasn't in Cebu or Mactan, home of guitar-making, it was in a small corner of Naga City. I don't know that he made great guitars, though with the mind's tendency to embellish recollections of boyhood, he seems that way now to me. He at least had the reputation for being so. I discovered him in the course of looking for a way to pluck an acoustic guitar without growing nails, which our high school laboratory teacher frowned on. By dint of asking around, I finally heard of him. Mang Belo was his name, a nickname for Isabelo, pronounced with customary provincial accent as Bilo (hard "o").

He lived in the outskirts of town, in a small shack on a patch of earth that teemed with shrubbery. He worked in a shed fronting his shack, an open-air enclosure with a makeshift roof over it, marvelously cluttered with wood, strings, screws, carpentry tools and all sorts of thingamajigs. Mang Belo himself was a sight to see. He sat on a stool in shorts and *sando*, his feet propping up the planks of wood that would soon turn into the shape of a guitar while his hands worked busily chiseling, sandpapering and tightening nuts and bolts. What I particularly noticed the first time I saw him were his knees, which teemed with knobs of what I thought to be bone. I asked him if he had gotten those things from a rough and tumble life. He laughed.

On the table beside him was a half-empty bottle of gin, the *bilog* kind, from which he took liberal swigs while working and telling stories. The second he was as fond of as the first. He was a garrulous raconteur and had no end of stories to tell, many of them pretty tall even from where I stood, which was not over five feet. It was from him I learnt about the uncanny talents of the *manghihilots* from Magarao, who at their best could presumably pull a tooth from a patient without anesthesia simply by pressing a point on the top of the head. Or who could cure a sprain or broken leg by massaging parts of the body far away from where the affliction was. He would punctuate his tales with enthusiastic gulps while his wife, who puttered about sweeping debris from the earthen floor, pooh-poohed his stories and nagged him about the evils of drinking. Mang Belo would try to imitate her while shaking silently in mirth, and wink at me.

It was only much later I would learn there was a connection between the globules on his knees and the *bilog* in his hand. What his knees sported were ravages of gout, an affliction from which he suffered mercilessly, and the cause of it was the thing aptly nicknamed "Marca Demonyo." Alas, my path of knowledge to this would be bitterly experiential.

But despite his drinking, or probably because of it, Mang Belo was a craftsman. He took fierce pride in his work, and the pay he got—which was a pittance, driving an army of musicians to troop to his secret abode seeking his services—was almost inconsequential. He discussed the finer points of his work with his professional customers animatedly, particularly the amplification features of the solid body electrical guitars which he was increasingly called upon to make. He refused to let a customer leave unsatisfied, diligently redoing guitars that had been brought back to him because of imperfections.

I never saw him again after that brief stretch of time when I religiously visited him every afternoon after school. I would hear later that he died an early death from overwork and overdrink. But I don't know. With life's capacity for defying the natural laws of physics, or medicine, he probably lived a long and happy life, making more guitars that wove their magic on those who heard them, laughing and telling stories to those who would listen to them, while he grew more knobs on his knees and sprang to mirthful laughter at the touch of gin on his lips.

Some things at least never die.

* * *

Comments to dequiros@vasia.com

DENR controversy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE ISSUE between Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez, who is now facing the Commission on Appointments, and the Environment Management Bureau director during the Estrada administration, Peter Abaya, is actually not as difficult to comprehend as people fear.

In 1991 the Philippine Senate ratified Philippine participation among 73 countries around the world in the Montreal Protocol, whereby they agreed to eliminate importation of harmful chemicals known as "ozone-depleting substances (ODS)" by year 2010. The Senate (and this is good for the commission to remember) subsequently ratified two other international agreements related to the protocol. ODS, such as the freon or halon used in the cooling systems of air conditioners and refrigerators, are known to destroy the ozone layer in the stratosphere, thus allowing unrestrained lethal ultraviolet rays to enter the earth. These rays cause skin cancer and cataract, destroy the human immune system and disrupt the food chain, hence the international clamor for a reduction of their use. Under the protocol, the Philippines put together an "Updated Country Program" for ODS reduction, using the 1996 import data as base, as follows: 25 percent reduction by 2001, 50 percent by 2005, 85 percent by 2008 and 100 percent by 2010.

* * *

For its assiduous compliance with the phase-out program since 1993, the country won two prestigious international awards in 1997: the "Outstanding National Ozone Unit Award" from the United Nations Environment Program and the "Leadership in the Phase-out of ODS in the Solvent Sector Award" from the US Environmental Protection Agency. Buoyed by these awards, the Philippines sought to fast-track the phase-out and import reductions. The same technical working group of scientists and experts which crafted the "Country Program" worked hard for two years to draft the Chemical Control Order (CCO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which spelled out how the phaseout would be effected.

* * *

In 2000 when Antonio Cerilles was the environment secretary, something went wrong. The EMB under Abaya inserted what is known as "Footnote 3" into the CCO, allowing for a 75 percent increase in importation over the 1996 baseline data. This translated into the importation of 1,330.43 metric tons more of ODS over the year 2000 target. Bought at a price of $1.20 per kilo and resold at $6 per kilo, that increase was estimated to have fetched a profit margin for the new importers of at least P319 million. At various forums and at the Commission on Appointments environment committee hearing last week, Abaya sought to justify this increase by saying it made the CCO level "realistic" by reflecting the "real requirements." He said the increase would "legitimize" the ongoing smuggling of these substances.

* * *

As expected, the big jump in ODS importation for 2000 alarmed the international community and embarrassed the country. Alvarez later lamented that it "made us look like an outlaw nation." Robert Vance Pulley, World Bank country and Asian region director, wrote Alvarez that the 75 percent increase was "technically a contradiction of the Montreal Protocol obligations," while the Stockholm Environment Institute strongly reminded the Philippines of its "legal obligation" to undertake progressive cuts on importation.

At the Senate hearing, Abaya stressed that with the new "realistic levels" brought about by the 75 percent increase, the importation for year 2000 actually turned out to be even below par. But even assuming this, Abaya still has to answer a couple of questions. One is why he authorized the increase without even consulting the Philippine Ozone Desk, the protocol's watchdog here. The Ozone Desk was funded by the World Bank with $25 million, in order that only reputable scientists and experts will be recruited to man it (that's how serious the international community is about monitoring compliance with the protocol). Because the Ozone Desk was not consulted, Abaya's 75 percent addition to the baseline is not recognized by the Protocol Secretariat. Abaya stressed that the grant of new importations was well within his authority as chief of the EMB, but the question is, why did he not consult the Ozone Desk about the change?

* * *

Then too, Abaya gave permits to import the increased amount of 1,330.43 mt of ODS to eight new, undercapitalized, untested firms with no track record in the ODS-related industry and trained personnel, and lacked registration certificates, as required by the DENR's CCO. One of them is a surveyor and adjusters firm, while another is in the realty business. I understand some of them were Chinese friends of Erap. Two received their licenses to import only two days after they applied. Interestingly, there were 10 other firms that had been importing ODS over the years, which were either chemical companies or appliance firms using these substances, but they were not given part of the 75 percent increase. In fact the new firms got to import 1.75 mt more than the old firms for 2000. But even more curiously, the new firms stopped importing the ODS in 2001. Abaya has wisely chosen to avoid meeting this issue head-on, preferring to concentrate on his mathematical computations.

There is no evidence that Abaya personally profited from the new importations, but the circumstances certainly don't look good for him. In fact this issue is clearly for the Ombudsman and not for the Commission on Appointments, and Alvarez was totally justified to stall the Palace appointment of Abaya to the post of assistant secretary. Was the Presidential Management Staff then under Vicky Garchitorena aware of the controversy when it endorsed that appointment to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo?

Guilty pleasures

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

HOW does one begin to count the pleasures of working at home?

For starters, the luxury of getting up any time you want to. Or if you have to see off children and "salaryman" hubby as they head for school and office, the untold pleasure of returning to bed once they're gone, to read the day's papers, to nap, or to vegetate in front of the TV set.

As the supermodel said: Some days, you just don't feel like getting out of bed for less than $10,000. But can any amount of money equal the sheer bliss of lounging about all day in your sleepwear? How to fathom in material terms the psychic income earned by not having to wear pantyhose for two years? Or allowing the pores in your face to breathe free without a layer of makeup?

At this point, I don't even know what kind of salary would lure me from the wonderful freedom of a solitary occupation. Well, it's at least solitary when I stay home to write, though I have to drag myself away from my cocoon from time to time to find things to write about. Sure, it can get lonely, but the incessant phone calls and texts remind me there's a whole world out there. Besides, the isolation is offset by the knowledge that one doesn't have to deal with office intrigue, backbiting, gossip and politics that are the bane of the workday world. Although I must admit that when I drop by the INQUIRER offices, I try my best to catch up on the latest juicy goings-on.

* * *

ILL, the biggest reward of working from home as got to be the freedom to indulge in one's uilty pleasures.

Pigging out on junk food and Diet Coke while lounging in bed is one of them. Sneaking out for an impromptu manicure/pedicure is another. A mid-day nap (after the mid-morning nap), a long hot shower, long chatty conversations on the phone, staying up late reading a thriller and knowing one doesn't have to get up till mid-morning—can you do all these on a 9-5 schedule?

Lately, I've discovered that I'm a closet local movie junkie. While the hubby automatically punches the remote buttons to the Discovery Channel the minute he gets home, I find that my TV set is nowadays invariably tuned to Cinema One when I'm supposed to be thinking about the next day's column. I've discovered a taste for sappy Filipino romantic movies, and have become a new convert to the fans clubs of Juday and Wowie, Jolina and Marvin, Claudine and Rico—and any variation among them. And of course, any movie that has Aga Muhlach in it gets my unswerving attention.

By the way, one late evening around Valentine's Day, I caught on Channel 15 (which is where Channel 13 is on our cable network) a movie starring Aga and Regine Velasquez. I chanced upon it in the middle of the movie, and have since tried to catch it in full. Will Viva please air it again and tell me when?

* * *

HOME work, or more precisely, working from home, is supposed to be the wave of the future. Thanks to the Internet and e-mail, people need no longer be confined in the same space, breathing in the same stale air, turning pale under the same fluorescent lighting, to work together and accomplish tasks as a team. Virtual networking is the way to go.

Along with saving people time lost on traffic-clogged commutes and expenses such as cab fare, tasteless cafeteria meals and Starbucks coffee, working from home is supposed to bring with it immeasurable collateral benefits as well. Such as more opportunity for bonding with one's children, flexibility in one's schedules and commitments, a seamless unity between one's work and home life.

Unfortunately for me, the chance to work largely from home came late in life, such that nowadays I'm the one who's usually left at home (along with the maid) while the hubby and the children are out most of the day. What I could have done with such a schedule when the children were much younger! Where before they used to cry: "Mom, you're aving again?" these days, what I hear most often is, "Mom, aren't you going anywhere?"

I don't know if I should be doing something more productive and meaningful with the time I'm spending at home, aside from meeting my daily deadline. My daughter says her goal in life is to find a job like mine, which will allow her to work from home. What she doesn't know, and what I won't tell her, is that God, being the Cosmic Joker he is, this chance of a lifetime won't come until she's old and foolish enough to be hooked on silly love teams.

* * *

CALLING all Maryknoll/Miriam alumni!

Miriam College is sponsoring the final performance of the musical "Alikabok" this Saturday, March 2, at 8 p.m. at the Music Museum. The special event is part of the fund-raising campaign for an Endowment Fund for Scholarships and Faculty Development and the improvement of the Marian Auditorium, launched as part of Miriam's 75th anniversary celebrations.

"Alikabok" is an original Filipino musical written by Ryan Cayabyab and Noel Balmaceda, and stars Chris Villonco, Diane de la Fuente and Jeffrey Hidalgo.

The musical tells the story of Bising Vallejo, a wealthy and privileged turn-of-the-century Filipina who discovers her love for country and evolves into a brave, committed *katipunera* fighting for our country's independence. Maryknollers might be interested to know that "Alikabok" is produced by two alumnae: Celeste Legaspi (College '71) and Girlie Rodis (College '76).

For inquiries, please contact 927-2421 to 32, ext. 302 or e-mail at endowment@mc.edu.ph. Tickets are also available at the gate.

Inquirer youth reading campaign

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THE "SEVEN-MINUTE RUSH" and high were all worth it for some 300 students from 20 schools nationwide. The Inquirer Inter-collegiate Debating Championship that this newspaper vigorously supported (the UP Debate Society hosted) for college students ended two days ago. It yielded winners who will represent the country in Mahidol, Thailand. Their trip will be supported by the INQUIRER.

Congratulations to the winners: Ateneo de Manila (1st and 2nd place), UP Diliman and FEU.

So how did the INQUIRER get into debates? The recent championship, the first of its kind to use the Asian parliamentary format, was the Inquirer Readership Program's "flagship event" for this year. The program aims to arrest the alarming decline in newspaper readership especially among the youth.

Well, you can't debate much unless you read much and absorb much. Many probably won't read much unless pushed to do so because they badly need to hone their mind in order to clearly think, speak, argue and reason. And clear reasoning, it is hoped, should translate into reasonable if not great decisions and actions.

As INQUIRER publisher Isagani Yambot said during opening night, "Debating compels the debaters to read, research and study the issues thoroughly. It requires intelligent judgment and a strong reasoning faculty, traits that can be developed through good reading habits."

And unlike the television debating fare where out-shouting seems to be the standard in order to get across, true debate, Yambot said, is "a civilized way of settling disputes, which would otherwise be resolved by violence or force of arms." Would that this were the case in many disputes that plague this country.

In the case of the INQUIRER-sponsored debates, the criteria for winning were "method, manner and matter" which the adjudicators carefully noted. A team's position (pro or con) on an issue was not necessarily going to give it a winning edge.

"Matter" is the stuff that comes with much reading. And the debaters had to read on the current burning issues because the topic for debate that could be sprung on them could be the day's headline news.

Did they read the day's INQUIRER? Have they read in the past so many newspapers, magazines and books that would buttress their arguments? No read, no brain food, no ideas.

And so the INQUIRER has what it calls the Inquirer Readership Program which includes the Teeners Read, Too! Program, the Inquirer's Young Readers Program which includes advocacy, school tours and special events. The newspaper has youth-oriented sections such as the 2BU!, Junior Inquirer and the Youngblood column.

In the book "A is for Ox: The Collapse of Literacy and the Rise of Violence in an Electronic Age," author Barry Sanders writes about "the death of the word (which) signifies a terrifying break in human nature and portends a cataclysm heralded by our current epidemic of youth violence."

Yes, the Word. As "In the beginning was the Word." The word as spoken, as heard. As read. Humans are not like other creatures. We use words not just in order to get what we want but to lay bare our thoughts, our ideas. Says renowned writer Nadine Gordimer in "The Unkillable Word": "Conservative, liberal and left-wing thinkers in contemporary schools of linguistic philosophy agree about one thing: man became man not by the tool but by the Word. It is not walking upright and using a stick to dig for food or strike a blow that makes a human being, it is speech."

Humans speak and listen (even the speech- and hearing-impaired, I must add). But Sanders says, very few oral peoples in the world—that vast assembly of speakers and listeners—ever make the radical move into literacy. Literates, he adds, make up a very small minority of the world's population.

Reading make literates of us. Literacy is a state of no return. Literacy empowers the consciousness. It is more than just knowing how to read and write. The reading program that the INQUIRER pushes among the young is more than just reading signs and headlines.

But there is a state before literacy that is just as important, Sanders tells us. And that is orality. A rich experience of orality—such as of tribal myths and stories told by the fireside, poems recited from memory by village elders, songs our grandmothers taught us, tales our parents read to us—is a great prelude to literacy, a fertile ground for things to take root in, a storehouse of wisdom. Television can't compare.

"A is for Ox" explains how the mind is debilitated and the emotions get short-circuited by too much TV. "It strangles the development of their own voices and denies them their imaginative powers. Some neuro-anatomists argue that excessive TV viewing...ultimately takes a serious toll. They believe that the limbic system of the brain—the mysterious subcortical part of the brain that researchers designate as the image-making center—develops more slowly when a young person spends half of his or her waking life in front of the TV set."

TV, he adds, washes the child clean of his or her own images. It denies the youngster the chance to turn inside himself or herself and to have a silent conversation with that budding social construct, the self.

Are those of us who are in love with the printed/read word afraid we'd lose readership and close shop? No, we're not afraid for ourselves. We're afraid young minds would fail to develop into great intellects and youthful hearts fail to grow into big ones. Imagine reading becoming a thing of the past.

Of wizards and hobbits

YOUNGBLOOD

Bernice C. Roldan

*We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.***

WHENEVER I come across film reviews pitting "The Lord of the Rings" against "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" (and there are many), it almost ruins my day. Almost. I take a few deep breaths, unknot my brow and philosophize that comparing the books and films is like comparing apples to oranges.

One day, I read a tad too many vicious reviews ("To those who gave 'Harry Potter' five stars, they'll have to give 'Lord of the Rings' 10 to do it justice." "'The Lord of the Rings' cinematography makes 'Harry Potter' look like it was shot in a school play for rich kids." "I always found the 'Harry Potter' books sweet if a little thin."). So I tried to put myself in the critics' shoes and mentally compare the two.

From what I know, J.R.R. Tolkien created a mythology, an entirely different world. In the far corners of his mind, the craggy terrains of Middle Earth took shape, and it was soon populated by a variety of non-humans like hobbits, elves, dwarves, orcs and so on. Languages like Elvish were spoken, and different number systems were used (eleventy-what?). In this world, human beings are just starting to come into their own.

Harry Potter, on the other hand, belongs to a magical version of the modern world. He goes to a wizarding school (Hogwarts); withdraws galleons, sickles and knuts from a bank run by goblins (Gringotts). His school subjects include Transfiguration, Potions and Herbology; and his favorite sport is Quidditch. Modes of transportation include Floo Powder, Apparating and the Knight Bus. Goblins, hags, werewolves and giants are in the periphery here; we read more about wizards, witches and muggles. Simply put, this is a magical version of the world as we know it.

Obviously, the similarities between "The Lord of the Rings" and "Harry Potter" are superficial. I have seen both films, and I loved both. I didn't dare blink while watching "The Fellowship of the Ring," it was clearly a work of art. It was so evident that director Peter Jackson treated the material with love and respect. With the scriptwriting process taking three years, and filming the trilogy in New Zealand for 18 months with a relatively low budget of less than $300 million, the film shows that all efforts paid off.

I remember emerging from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" deeply impressed, but still nagged by a few misgivings. I would have given it an eight on a scale of one to 10. What got my goat was that the nuances of some characters were sacrificed. Whatever happened to Percy Weasley's bossiness? Where's the scene where the normally prankish Weasley twins helped Harry with his school trunk on the Hogwarts Express?

"The Fellowship of the Ring" seemed to benefit more from better treatment. I was hoping that the "Harry Potter" filmmakers would take some pointers from "The Lord of the Rings," and treat Harry's world better in the upcoming films.

Oh well, I philosophized once more as I exited the packed Glorietta theaters. But that just shows you can't transpose certain parts of literature to film. You can't bring Harry's witty, self-deprecating thoughts to the big screen. In the end, all the films will simply show that it's better to burrow at home with the books where Harry, Ron, Hermione and all the rest come to life.

I had learned to live with the fact that every film review in existence would choose "The Lord of the Rings" over "Harry Potter," when I came across Roger Ebert's (of Siskel & Ebert fame) online review of "The Lord of the Rings." He was impressed, but stressed that Jackson's film is a "Lord of the Rings" tailor-fit for our times. It belongs to the tech-savvy era of "Gladiator" and "The Matrix." He pointed out that the books are a reassuring journey interspersed with poems and songs in Elvish. One action-packed film sequence goes on and on and on, Ebert noted, but Tolkien sums it up in 500 words.

Ebert gave the film three stars. Good Lord, I thought, what's he gonna give "Harry Potter" then—two stars?

I was startled that he gave "Harry Potter" four. I read the words "enchanting classic," "surprisingly faithful to the novel" and "[the set] continues the feeling of an atmospheric book illustration."

There you go. Not everyone likes ice cream. Not everyone thinks "The Fellowship of the Ring" is a faultless movie.

I'm the kind of "Harry Potter" reader who can ace any online trivia quiz. I can tell which theories for the upcoming book ("Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix") are plausible or baseless. Perhaps it's a bonus that J.K. Rowling conjured Harry Potter during my time, but I know that I would still care about Harry, Ron and Hermione (and the Weasley twins, Neville, Professor Lupin and all the rest) even if they came out 50 years ago. Rowling's deceptively simple and effortless prose would still keep me riveted when the scenes shift from being enchanting and hilarious, to horrifying or painfully sad.

I'm equally thankful to "The Lord of the Rings" and "Harry Potter" for one thing: bringing both children and adults across the world back to reading. In this day and age, literature is fighting for our attention over other more dominant media.

I'm a bit intimidated to read "The Lord of the Rings," to be honest. I saw one of the secretaries in the office reading a brand-new copy of "The Hobbit," and I salute her. But I'm aware that the language and writing style make for mentally exhausting work. My brother says Tolkien describes patterns in detail. Dedicated geeks have reportedly dropped the Tolkien tomes in surrender at some point.

I picked up a tattered copy of "The Fellowship of the Ring" at home a while back, and immediately found the author's foreword a bit arduous. My work will be cut out for me when I pick up the Tolkien books someday, but I trust it will be infinitely satisfying when I reach the end.

Bernice C. Roldan, 22, is a technical writer. Lately, she has been reading J.K. Rowling and Haruki Murakami during her spare time.

THEY SAID

Destruction of justice system

"We cannot possibly accommodate all accused criminals, similarly situated as Erap, to leave for abroad without destroying our system of justice beyond repair."

—Former Senate President Jovito Salonga, opposing the proposal to allow former President Estrada to seek treatment in the United States

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Beheadings not representative of Muslim culture or religion

THE VIDEO footage of the Abu Sayyaf beheadings was first shown to me and about seven other Catholic bishops on June 14, 2000, in Malacañang. We came as bishops mostly from Mindanao to express our apprehensions about the government's policy at a time of all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. In particular, we expressed our concerns about the plight of thousands of refugees and the need for peace talks to resume.

We also pointed out the importance of distinguishing the MILF from the Abu Sayyaf group. Only a month earlier, the Abu Sayyaf had killed Fr. Rhoel Gallardo and some of his fellow teachers in Basilan. As a bandit group, the Abu Sayyaf's criminal activities were condemned even by the ulama as "un-Islamic" in our Bishops-Ulama dialogue.

Before the video footage was shown to the bishops and other government officials, it was explained that it had been seized or obtained from the Abu Sayyaf. There was no mention of the MILF (although some officials were of the opinion that both groups were linked).

It is in this light that the showing of the video footage today should be explained to mature audiences: that these are criminal actions of a small bandit group that do not represent a religious or cultural community, no more than the gruesome killing of Fr. Tullio Favali by "Christian" fanatics could be representative of the Christian community.

Gory pictures of killings and massacres, including those of the Ipil raid in April 1995, are always unpleasant to look at. Yet the public has a right to be informed about the truth and the clear and present danger posed by some armed groups.

This is also why the Mindanao bishops are asking for the full disclosure of the congressional hearings on the Lamitan issue, to allay the fears and apprehensions of the local populace. Only in truth can we start building a genuine culture of peace in Mindanao.

—ANTONIO J. LEDESMA, S.J., bishop, Prelature of Ipil, Bishop's Residence, 7001 Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay

VAL HANDUMON

US interests complement RP needs

A LOT of tension has risen since American soldiers arrived on Philippine soil. Many in the noisier minority believe that the Americans are here again to wreak all kinds of havoc. They recall old, still festering issues against the Americans, like the toxic dumps in Clark and Subic, and they demand that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo send the Americans away.

But they refuse to accept that there is a good reason why they have come once again. It's not to revive the bars and prostitution business in Pampanga or to leave more toxic waste. They have come here to help fight a local terrorism that has gone on for too long and continue their bigger war on terrorism.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the police have time and again been unable to bring local terrorists under control effectively or permanently stop their depredations. Many reasons are cited for this, but chief among them are inadequate training and poor weaponry. The answers to these great deficiencies, the Americans have in abundance. It would appear the better part of valor and practical consideration to enlist their help here. It makes things easier that American interests and our need are complementary in this respect.

There is no shame or disadvantage in having the US military help us in this crucial undertaking.

—MARCO VILLACORTA, Ateneo de Manila High School

Accused in parricide case didn't flee

I CALLED the attention of researcher Armin P. Adina to the errors in the report on the Valerio murder ("Whatever Happened To...?, PDI, 2/21/02) but he insisted that his statements were accurate. Specifically, I objected to two falsities he purveyed as facts: (1) "Jimenez, Quintana and Baran (the three other accused) were all arrested by the NBI. Milagros (Valerio fled to Davao City but later surrendered voluntarily to the Region 11 Office of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group," and (2) "Jimenez, Baran, Quintana and Cabador are detained at the Quezon City Jail. Milagros [Valerio] is at the CIDG Detention Center in Camp Crame." Adina claims he based his report on court records.

The meaning of the first quote is clear: that unlike the three other accused, Valerio was not arrested because she fled. Later, she voluntarily surrendered.

But if Adina read the entire records carefully, he would have known that the "flight" he presented as fact was only a theory of the prosecution. The National Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice documents forming part of the court records show that Valerio did not flee to Davao City. She and her minor children transferred to Davao City (her original domicile where her mother and sister reside) at a time when she was not yet a suspect and no case had yet been filed against her. Later, NBI agents from Manila abducted her in Davao City (meaning, she was forcibly taken, without any warrant of arrest) and brought to Manila (without any accompanying counsel or relative) where she was presented to the media as a suspect. Much later, when a case was filed against her with the DOJ, she faced the charge through her lawyer. Still much later, when a case for parricide was filed against her in court and a warrant of arrest was issued, she voluntarily surrendered.

All these facts are on record.

Valerio is now detained at the Quezon City Jail (not at the CIDG Detention Center). She has been there since May 2001. This is also on record.

Unbelievably, Adina explained away his use of the word "fled" by saying that Valerio rode on a plane to Davao City and, thus, "fled" is correct. He also claimed that I was "oversensitive." I challenged him to check the dictionary. It mentions "escape" as one of the meanings of "flee." Any ordinary Filipino will tell him that "fled" means "*tumakbo*" or "*tumakas*" and in the context of a murder or parricide change, it means escaping from prosecution.

I would exhort Adina to be careful in his use of language, particularly in reporting about a murder case. Unfortunately, he has misled the INQUIRER readers and has served the practice of trying by publicity persons accused of a crime.

—EVALYN G. URSUA, counsel for Milagros E. Valerio, 11 Matimtiman St., Teachers Village, Diliman, Quezon City

THERE was no malicious intent when I wrote the report. The contested sentence was based on a court document. It was a paraphrase of a portion of the Department of Justice resolution dated June 23, 2000, Pages 11 to 12, and the statement that she "voluntarily surrendered" was taken from a separate court document which said that Valerio had been apprehended.—**Armin P. Adina, PDI Research Department**

Established route to Ombudsman's office

THIS has to do with your news report mentioning our letter to the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) regarding the forfeiture petitions it filed against former Energy Minister Geronimo Velasco, Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez, Carmencita Clavecilla, Alfredo de Borja, Fe Roa Gimenez and Ignacio Gimenez.

In our letter we stated that we are returning, as we have in fact already returned, to the PCGG the records of the said cases, because under Republic Act 6770, otherwise known as the Ombudsman Act of 1989, our "office has no authority to conduct a preliminary investigation of the forfeiture petitions as (they) involved ill-gotten wealth acquired before Feb. 25, 1986," as reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in Cojuangco vs. PCGG (190 SCRA 226).

While we appreciate your accurate reporting of our letter, we are nonetheless intrigued by the slur on our efficiency when your report said, "Desierto did not explain, however, why it took his office more than a month to determine that it had no authority to investigate the forfeiture petitions that it received last Jan. 2".

Please understand that cases filed with our office (we receive an average of 700 cases every month) do not go immediately to the Ombudsman. They pass through the established channel of authority.

The four PCGG complaints, along with the other cases in the batch, took the standard route from our Screening Committee to the Central Records Division (for docketing) and then to the Evaluation and Preliminary Investigation Bureau (Epib), for study. The cases reached the Epib on Jan. 28, 2002. The PCGG was informed of our position on Feb. 19, 2002 or only 22 days from said date.

It is not a simple matter of studying and analyzing the PCGG complaints and the evidence adduced in support thereof. Our Epib investigators had to meticulously go over each page of the petitions from cover to cover, search for the law and jurisprudence applicable to the cases and then prepare their report containing their findings and recommendation to the Ombudsman. And it was during this process that the Epib found out that we cannot acquire jurisdiction over these PCGG cases since the alleged amassing of ill-gotten wealth by the respondents occurred prior to the above-mentioned statutory cut-off date. Our own authority to initiate such forfeiture proceedings starts only from Feb. 25, 1986 onward.

The minimum period required of our investigators to resolve their case assignments is 60 to 90 days. The PCGG cases were resolved in only 22 days. Just like in the other quasi-judicial agencies and even with the courts, 22 days is not too long a period to act on a case.

—JOSE T. DE JESUS JR., spokesperson, Office of the Ombudsman, Old Nawasa Bldg., 176 Arroceros St., Manila

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Wrong sign language used in advertisement

I AM Ervin R. Reyes, 30 years old and proud to be deaf. Even if I cannot hear, I do not see this as a handicap. I am a successful computer-skilled person. I have proven this when I represented the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority-NCR in the 10th Philippine National Skills Competition held in Davao City last September 2001. I competed on the webpage design category against the best contestants from all regions and received the lone gold medal. All the other contestants could hear and I was the only deaf person in that category. I will represent the Philippines in the International Skills Competition in India in 2003. I am currently the deaf coordinator and Web developer of the Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf Foundation Inc. We help train people like me to become the best in computers. I know that we can be successful if given the right opportunity.

I am writing about the Jollibee "Bee Happy" advertisement, showing a young deaf girl signing and Aga Muhlach asking her to teach the other boy with no hearing disability. I'd like to congratulate the management and staff of Jollibee for promoting and endorsing sign language. Many people are now aware of the Filipino sign language. Many now know that there are people who use it as their own language of communication.

I'd also like to thank Muhlach who helped endorse sign language and increase awareness about the deaf. Every time I visit Jollibee stores, I see some adults and children use it and they sometimes sign to us. I appreciate that very much.

But, I would like to comment on the improper way of signing the word "happy." I believe that the sign is not correct. The sign should be both palms facing-in stroking upwards at the same time and not alternately. The deaf girl signs it correctly. But Muhlach, the other kid, the Jollibee mascot and the service crew all sign inaccurately. Muhlach's signing of other words like "Jollibee," "teach" and "champ" are all correct but the "French fries" translation was way off.

Since I'm deaf and a Filipino sign language user, I know what signs are right or wrong.

I would like to appeal to the management and the people behind the production of the "Bee Happy" advertisement to please make the necessary corrections on the signs. Please consult the deaf who use sign language on its proper use. TV is a very powerful medium. Wouldn't it be better to spread the right information rather than the inaccurate one?

—ERVIN R. REYES, Manila Christian Computer Institute for the Deaf Foundation Inc., Old Sta. Mesa, Manila

Karaoke diplomacy

PINOY KASI

Michael L .Tan

YOU'VE heard of gunboat diplomacy, an American favorite where the government deploys naval warships for "friendly visits" to hot spots, even as US diplomats negotiate with somewhat stubborn parties.

In the early 1970s there was ping-pong diplomacy, referring to the initial overtures in US President Richard Nixon's time to establish ties with China. The Americans and Chinese warmed up to each other with an exchange of ping-pong teams.

Now it seems China's into karaoke diplomacy. During US President George W. Bush's recent visit to China, he had no less than Jiang Zemin, China's president, serenading him, karaoke style, with the Italian aria "O Sole Mio."

But Bush wasn't Jiang's first (I'm at a loss now for terms), should we say, serenadee, karaoke victim.

Jiang has had a lot of practice before Bush. He's known to have serenaded former Russian President Boris Yeltsin, and to have sung in Hawaii in 1997 during his first state visit to America. In October last year, he had another dress rehearsal, serenading no less than our very own Ate Glo when she visited China, and with "O Sole Mio," no less.

Our Ate Glo did one over Kuya George, gamely singing along with Jiang. (Not that she hasn't been singing along with Bush but that is in a more figurative way.) I'm surprised the local media—not even our movie gossip journalists—didn't play up that historic Filipino-Chinese duet. I remember catching a short videoclip on CNN but it didn't have the sound bite. Your guess is as good as mine as to whose voice CNN deemed inappropriate for its millions of viewers worldwide.

Let me clarify something about the karaoke bit. Jiang, like millions of other Chinese, is known to be a karaoke fan, but at state functions, he doesn't use the karaoke. After all, he heads the world's largest nation, population-wise, and has entire orchestras at his disposal. A simple man, this Mr. Jiang, he belted out "O Sole Mio" for Bush accompanied by an accordion player.

In fairness, we must remember it wasn't Jiang or Ate Glo who set the pace for this sing-along diplomacy. If you'll remember, Imelda Marcos mastered this craft much earlier. Way before many of us were born, or admit to being born, Meldy was serenading everyone she could force to listen. No karaoke then—she brought her own band, or would croak a capella.

She'd croon whenever there were election campaigns, and after the Apo got elected, she went on to hijack every state function. Can you hear her now, the "*sa iyoooooo*" lilting in the air while doing her gooey-gooey eyes routine for her beloved Ferdie?

Occasionally though, she'd get to use those gooey-gooey eyes for other big shots as well, presumably with Ferdie's full consent. There was that other great Texan president, Lyndon B. Johnson. (Americans have this strange relationship with Texas—they have endless jokes putting down Texans, yet they keep electing them president.) And in 1976, as Ferdie's special envoy, she went off to Libya to soften Khaddafy, a major supporter of Muslim insurgents in Mindanao, for which she got the Tripoli Agreement that temporarily stopped hostilities.

Temporarily, I said. In retrospect, maybe she should have sung more in Mindanao. Then maybe Khadaffy Janjalani wouldn't have been named after Khadaffy and wouldn't have gone on to found the Abu Sayyaf.

After the Marcoses were drummed out of Malacañang, Filipinos realized that because of them, "Dahil sa Inyo," we were in a real rut. No, we didn't sing "Dahil sa Iyo" at Edsa. "Hindi Kita Malilimutan," a Catholic church song, became the new national *kundiman*. At each Edsa anniversary crowds sang out their pledge not to forget, sometimes with the older subversive *kundiman* from the American occupation, "Bayan Ko." But, alas, we did forget. The crowds kept getting smaller, and hey, how many people remember all the lyrics to that song? The other day when I told one of my classes Feb. 25 was a holiday, several of them chimed, "Why?"

But I digress. To get back to Jiang, it seems he was pioneering not just with karaoke but with song-and-dance diplomacy. After *solemio-ing* Bush, the spritely 76-year-old Jiang went on to dance with US First Lady Laura Bush, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Sarah Randt, wife of the US ambassador.

And where was Dubya? The White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer explained: "In order to avert an international incident of the highest order, President Bush showed judgment, discretion and valor and observed the dancing from the seated position."

That's the first wise decision I've heard of coming from Bush. Jiang's "O Sole Mio" must be really good.

* * *

No international incident if you Rock for Rock tomorrow night, March 1. The Reproductive Rights Resource Group and the UP Center for Women's Studies are organizing the concert to raise funds for the Raquel Edralin-Tiglao Institute for Family Violence Prevention. Rock bands like Color It Red and Session Road, as well as singers like Cynthia Alexander, Grace Nono and Carol Bello will be performing. Susan Fernandez hosts. This will be at the UP Theater in Diliman, starting at 7 p.m.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

Error-filled textbook disapproved

THIS refers to the letter of Antonio Calipjo Go which was published last Feb. 18.

When Education Secretary Raul Roco said that the textbooks to be used this coming school year, when the restructured Basic Education Curriculum will be implemented, will be the same, he was referring to the learning competencies which are the bases for textbook development and which did not change substantially. Roco in fact, insists that errors in textbooks be spotted and a team of evaluators met last month to again go through textbooks previously evaluated and approved by the Department of Education before more procurements are made. This team was composed of principals, supervisors and superintendents, public and private evaluators, civil society representatives, curriculum and discipline experts and trained master teacher evaluators.

The book "Science and Technology for the Modern World II" which Go cited as containing errors was disapproved last year during the evaluation of textbooks under the Social Expenditure Management Project and hence was not procured by the DepEd. The publisher was also informed of the errors found.

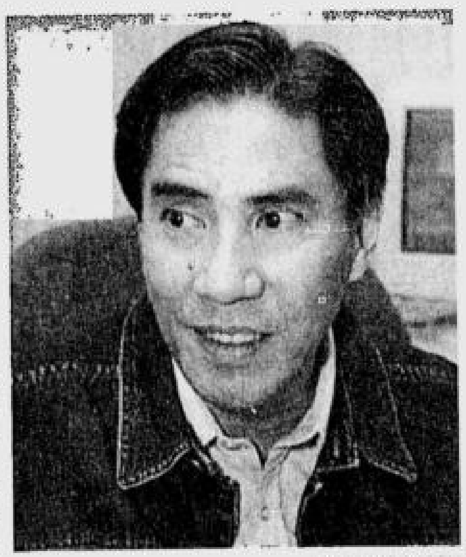
—FE A. HIDALGO, undersecretary for programs, Department of Education, DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Int'l health agencies applaud 'General Dayrit'

From page A1



BETOY JOHNSON

DAYRIT: He waged anti-polio campaign with an army of 68,000.

Officials of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund were all praises for Dayrit and all those who lent a hand in the first immunization round conducted from Feb. 2-8.

According to the Unicef, more than 11.7 million Filipinos below 5 years were given polio vaccine during that period.

"That is an achievement for everybody involved," said Dr. Gepke Hingst, Unicef health officer.

Unicef provided $2.3 million worth of polio vaccines for the immunization campaign.

The WHO had certified the Philippines and the rest of the WHO Western Pacific Region as polio-free in October 2000.

But because other countries in the African and Southeast Asian regions still have wild poliovirus in circulation, the Philippines is at risk of importing the virus and spreading it once again unless each child below 5 years received the polio vaccine.

"We need perseverance to maintain a polio-free status, which can only be done through a high saturation rate," said Hingst.

A second phase of the campaign, called "Balikan 2001," is scheduled for March 2-8.

Dr. Yang Baoping, head of the expanded program for immunization of the WHO Western Pacific Region, said they had counterchecked to ensure that no child below 5 years was missed during the first phase of the campaign.

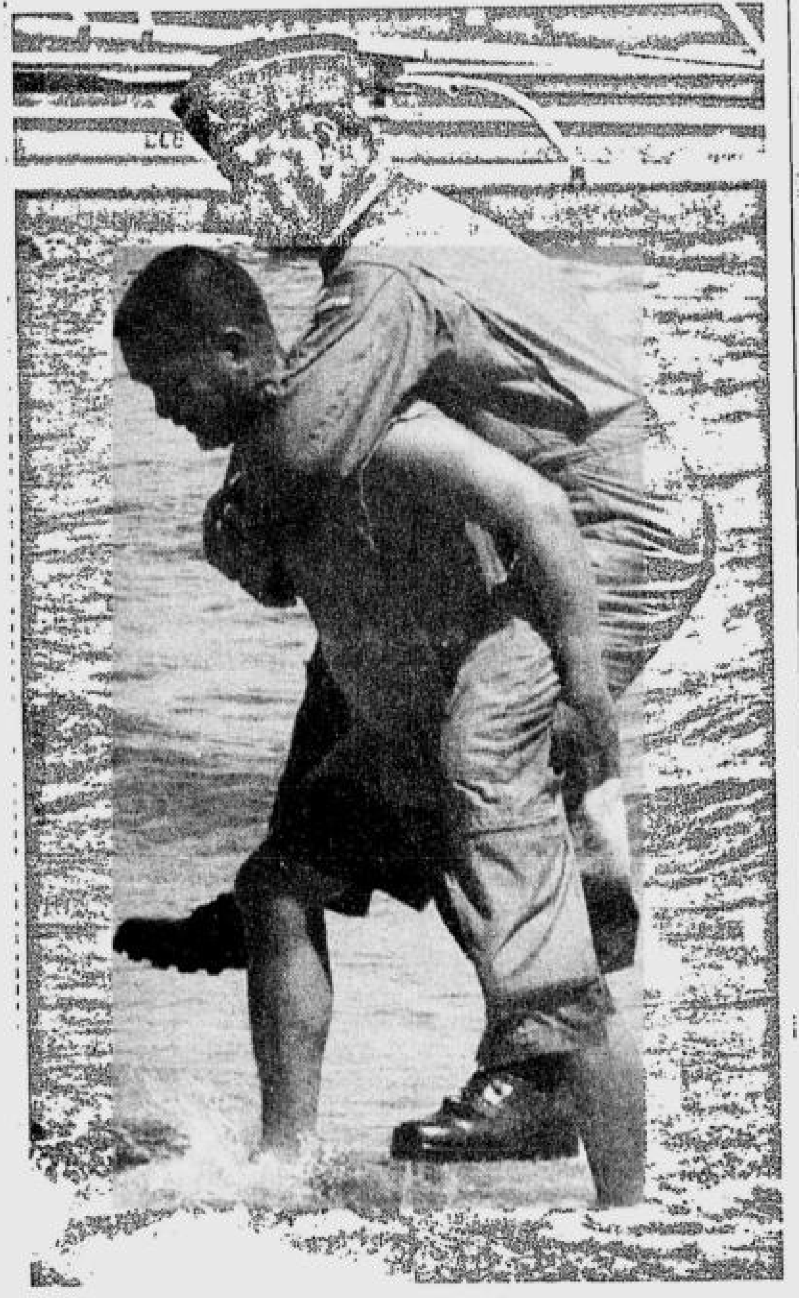
He said the DOH personnel and volunteers went to densely populated areas like Tondo after the first round of the campaign and "there was no evidence that we missed out on a cluster of children."

He cited an incident in Tondo where out of about 100 children, only one was missed out.

Dayrit said the DOH failed to achieve a 100-percent immunization rate because of inaccurate population figures from the National Statistics Office. There were also some island-provinces where the DOH could not go door-to-door and so had to set up fixed Patak Centers.

Dayrit said the DOH personnel and volunteers did not even spare Basilan and other "war-torn" areas.

In Western Mindanao, Dayrit said the DOH only managed to achieve a 95-percent immunization rate.



GENERAL ILAGAN: A piggyback ride to ignominy. DENNIS SABANGAN

Piggyback case hounds Air Force

From page A1

undo the damage wrought by photographs showing PAF Brig. Gen. Marciano Ilagan being carried piggyback by a boatman in knee-deep water while an American soldier strode nearby.

Ilagan is the commander of the PAF Tactical Operations Center at the Benito Ebuen Air Base in Cebu.

The photographs, taken on Sunday at a memorial service at sea for 10 American soldiers who died in the Friday crash of a US Chinook helicopter, sparked a slew of criticisms to the effect that Ilagan was an embarrassment to the Philippines.

But PAF spokesperson Maj. Arturo Orticio yesterday told defense reporters that the incident illustrated "a genuine Filipino tradition . . . showing our hospitality."

"The piggyback thing was offered to all VIPs (very important persons) present during the memorial service," Orticio said in a phone interview.

He said that in this traditional gesture of hospitality, Filipinos usually offered visitors everything, including their best beds.

But in this case, the American soldier, Sgt. Michael Farris, declined the offer and walked into the water, Orticio said.

Ilagan, a 1970 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, has chosen to keep silent on the matter.

Asked why, Orticio said: "Silence does not mean he is at fault or has committed any fault."

He theorized that Ilagan was keeping mum so the controversy would die down.

Orticio urged reporters not to dwell anymore on the matter. "Maybe we should just put a period (on) this issue," he said. "It will not help our nation."

Ilagan is still making himself scarce. Efforts to contact him yesterday in Cebu proved futile, as his staff said he was in Zamboanga.

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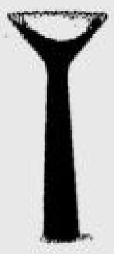

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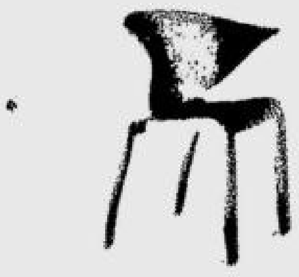

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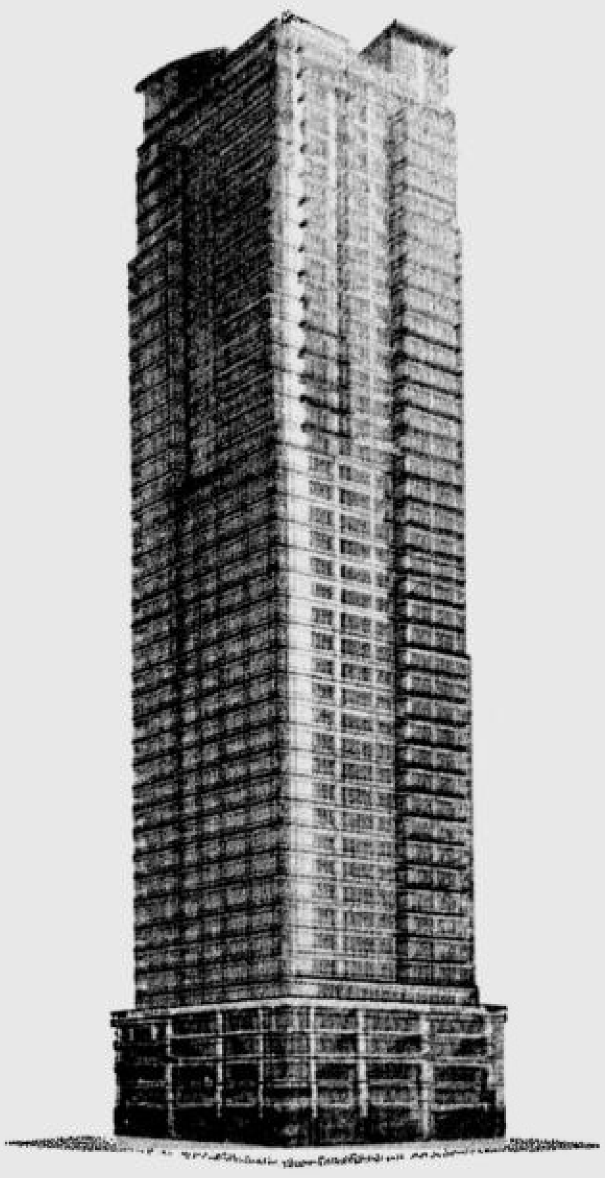

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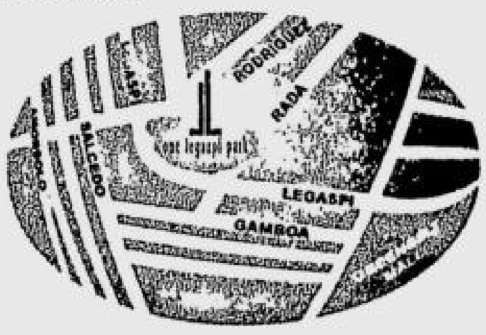

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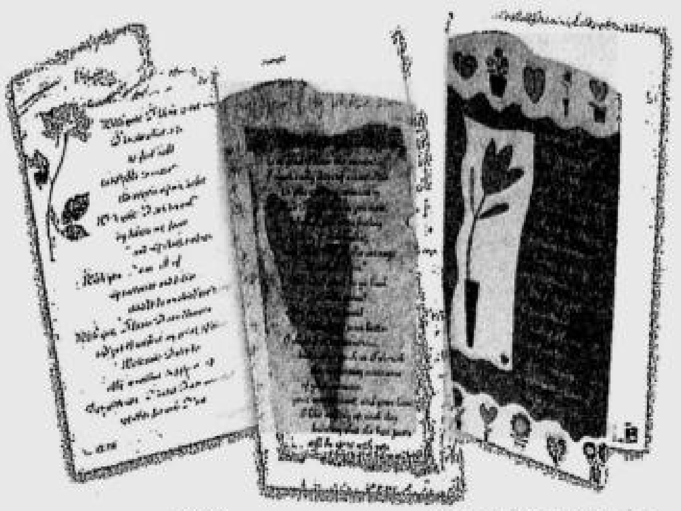

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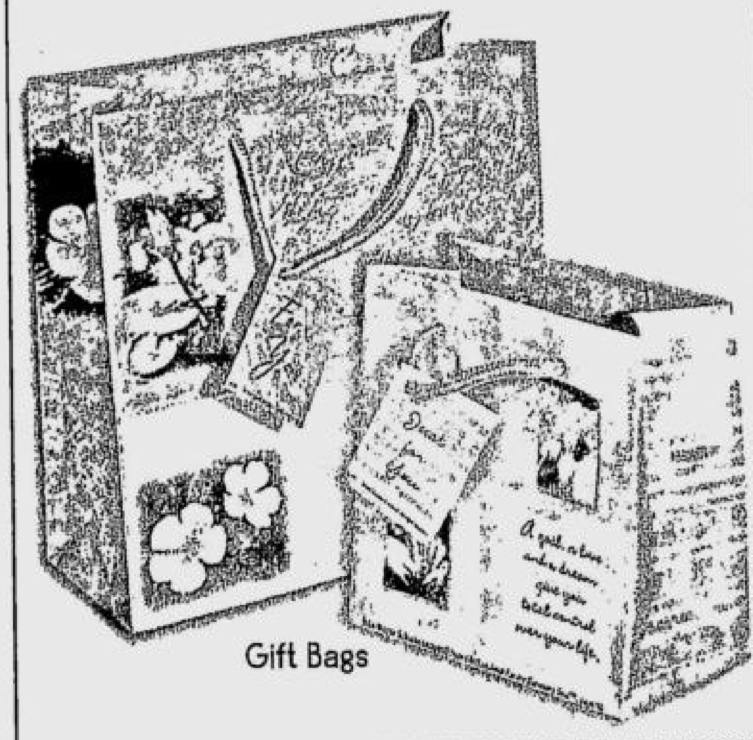

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Airport workers to protest vs Piatco

By N. Bordadora

WORKERS at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport said yesterday they are set to hold protest actions next week against the impending loss of their jobs with the opening of the new Naia Terminal 3.

At the same time, Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez pressed for a new round of talks with the airport and aviation workers who stand to be adversely affected by the operation of the new terminal.

Alvarez had previously set a dialogue between Piatco, the contractor for the new airport, and the workers but the scheduled meeting fell through. He has since asked both groups to try to meet again to negotiate a "win-win" solution.

Ceferino Lopez, spokesperson of the Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa Paliparan ng Pilipinas (SMPP), said at least 70 percent of Naia employees would lose their jobs when most of Terminal 2's operations are transferred to Terminal 3.

In previous dialogues with airport and aviation workers, Alvarez promised to try to convince the Piatco leadership to waive some of the exclusivity clauses in the Terminal 3 contact in order to accommodate the career personnel at Terminal 2.

Employees likely to be sacked with the opening of Terminal 3 in November are those in the flight operations division, the conveyor area, the mechanical and electrical divisions, and other support services in the terminal and on the tarmac.

Lopez said Piatco has already hired new employees to run operations at Terminal 3. He said it has conducted dry runs with the new personnel.

This has bolstered the current employees' fears they would soon be unemployed.

Lopez said the Naia management announced it would soon be offering early retirement packages to its employees since only a few of them would be absorbed at the new terminal.

For whacking DH with lamp, HK employer lands in jail

HONG KONG—Police arrested a 35-year-old local employer, surnamed Ho, after she allegedly assaulted her Filipino maid with a table lamp during a dispute, police spokesperson Mackenzie Mak said.

The domestic helper, identified only by her last name, Felioitas, 39, suffered head injuries in the incident, but was discharged from hospital after treatment, Mak said.

In a separate case, an Indonesian domestic helper was arrested for allegedly abusing her employer's 14-month-old boy, police said Wednesday.

The 28-year-old maid, surnamed Rosikah, was arrested on Tuesday after the boy's mother taped her allegedly beating her child on film using a hidden video camera installed in their apartment, Mak said.

The boy suffered bruises on his forehead and right foot, Mak said. He was in satisfactory condition in hospital, said a government spokesperson, speaking on terms of anonymity.

Local media said the toddler's mother installed the surveillance camera after discovering minor injuries on her son on several occasions. *AP*

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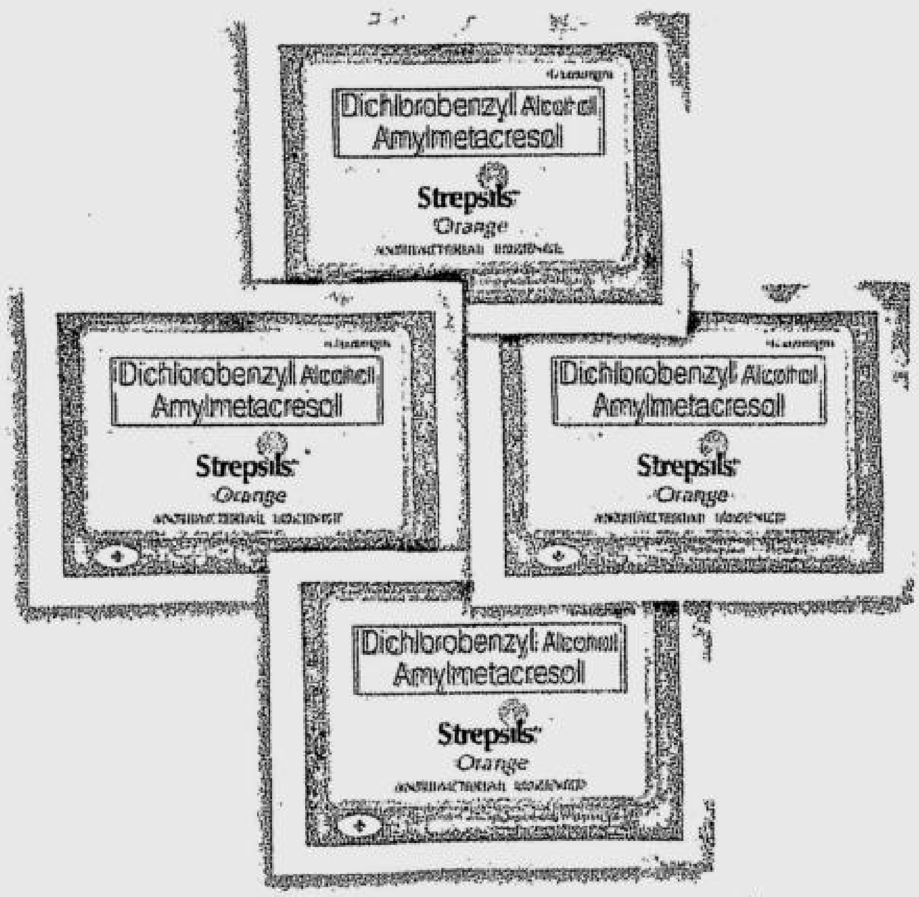

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Relief workers accused of abusing kids

LONDON—The United Nations and a major children's charity said Tuesday an investigation had uncovered allegations of widespread sexual abuse of children by relief agency workers assigned to help young people buffeted by years of war in West Africa.

The investigative findings were in an interim report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Save the Children, UK. The organizations launched a 40-day mission to refugee camps in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone late last year after sustained allegations that some aid workers were abusing children.

The UNHCR and Save The Children released the findings before the report was complete "because of the disturbing nature of these allegations, because of the apparent scope of the problem, and because of the need for an immediate and coordinated approach to implement measures by a wide range of agencies and organizations," Ron Redmond, UNHCR spokesperson, said in a telephone interview from Geneva.

Paul Nolan, child protection manager for Save The Children, concurred.

"What emerged was a problem that was widespread, quite possibly endemic and which also included people who were actually in place to provide those refugee children with the care and protection they were entitled to," he said.

So far, the investigation has turned up allegations against 67 workers in at least 40 organizations, said Save The Children's program officer Chris Robertson, based in Sierra Leone.

"It's a problem we know has been around for some time. There have been abuses in the past. What this does is show, in very stark terms, in the words of children themselves, the kinds of experiences they are being subjected to," Nolan said.

The report said allegations of sexual violence and exploitation "involved workers locally employed by national and international NGOs as well as by UN agencies including UNHCR." NGOs are nongovernment organizations, including relief agencies working among people afflicted by warfare, disease, starvation and natural disasters.

The investigative team discovered "a fairly widespread culture of exploitation," Nolan said.

"A whole range of people in a position of authority and trust were abusing those positions. All in return for sexual favors," Nolan said in a telephone interview in London.

The victims were overwhelmingly girls, but some boys were involved by the actions of women, he said.

The report said the allegations made by children could not be independently confirmed.

"Nevertheless, the number of allegations leaves no doubt that there is a serious problem of sexual exploitation," the two organizations announced. **AP**

Thai PM warns US on expulsion of journalists

BANGKOK—Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Wednesday warned the United States not to "step over the line" after it criticized a Thai government order expelling two foreign journalists who wrote a critical article.

Thaksin also urged the two journalists of the Far Eastern Economic Review magazine to admit their mistake and apologize. "Then everything will be fine, everything is over," he told reporters.

In a letter to Thailand's police chief, the Review's editor, Michael Vatikiotis, appealed for a prompt and amicable resolution of the situation.

But the letter dated Tuesday fell short of an apology. "I sincerely regret any apparent misunderstanding" caused by the article in the Jan. 10 issue, Vatikiotis wrote. The article had alleged tensions between Thaksin and King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the constitutional monarch who is held in high esteem among Thais. The Thai media and people almost never make controversial statements about the king.

Vatikiotis also requested a meeting with senior government officials to resolve the dispute.

The US state department expressed concern Monday after Thailand revoked the visas of US citizen Shawn Crispin and Rodney Tasker, a Briton, two Bangkok-based journalists of the Hong Kong-based magazine, owned by US Dow Jones and Co.

The state department urged Thailand to uphold its reputation as a strong supporter of freedom of the press.

Asked by reporters for his reaction, Thaksin said Thailand was a sovereign nation that could act as it saw fit. **AP**

AP

JIANG IN VIETNAM

Chinese President Jiang Zemin stands during the playing of the national anthems of China and Vietnam at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi, Vietnam, Wednesday Feb. 27. Jiang arrived in Vietnam for a three-day visit, as ties continue to warm between the two Communist neighbors. Trade and economic relations have expanded in the decade since they re-established diplomatic ties.

S. Korea workers end 2-day rail strike

SEOUL—State rail workers ended a two-day strike against President Kim Dae-jung's privatization program after reaching a compromise Wednesday with management, officials said.

The workers had demanded fewer work hours and feared the privatization plan would lead to mass layoffs. The strike ended after the two sides signed an agreement following overnight talks.

The deal includes a management promise to try to shorten work hours and to rehire some union leaders who were expelled previously for illegal labor protests. It also promises more allowances and other financial benefits to workers.

The government did not back down from its plan to privatize the state-run Korean National Railroad, but said it would consider the "public nature of the railroad," according to the agreement. It did not provide details.

Privatizing the national railway and other ineffective state firms is one of President Kim's economic policy priorities in his last year in office.

The change is part of a reform program designed to strengthen the South Korean economy, which rebounded from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

"Privatization is a matter of principle, about which the government is firm," chief presidential spokesperson Park Sun-sook said. "There is no change in government plans to enact related privatization laws within this year."

However, the ruling and opposition parties are concerned about losing worker support in an election year and have expressed reluctance to act on a government-proposed privatization bill. Local and presidential elections are scheduled in June and December, respectively. **AP**

Colombia rebels step up attacks vs gov't

BOGOTA, Colombia—Colombia's government ruled out swapping captured rebels for a kidnapped presidential candidate Tuesday, while the guerrillas waged more attacks and kidnappings and tried to assassinate the mayor of a town just outside their former safe haven.

With the military pushing deeper into the zone, rebels opened fire on the mayor of Puerto Rico, killing two of his bodyguards. Mayor Walter Castro, who escaped unharmed, is the third mayor of Puerto Rico to be elected in less than a year after his two predecessors were shot dead by the rebels.

Five other people died in separate attacks around the country blamed on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC—four police officers and a child, killed in an ambush and an attack on a small town.

Nineteen people were kidnapped at a FARC roadblock, though nine women, children and elderly men were released Tuesday evening, according to a report by Caracol Television, which broadcast interviews with the freed hostages.

Witness reports were also emerging that FARC rebels killed seven civilians over the weekend in the town of La Macarena as the guerrillas retreated from remote town in the former rebel sanctuary.

Troops taking part in the ground offensive into the rebel stronghold reached the dusty town for the first time on Tuesday, and were investigating the deaths, said Army spokesperson Capt. Jorge Florez.

Rebels kept up a bombing campaign against bridges and power stations begun last week after President Andres Pastrana ended the peace process and launched a military offensive to retake the zone.

The president had ceded the area, a vast swath of southern ranchland and woods, three years ago in hopes the rebels would end their 38-year war.

The FARC dynamited a bridge about 50 km north of Bogota on Tuesday, according to the Alvaro Cruz, the governor of Cundinamarca State.

Troops moved to prevent further attacks. About 40 soldiers were deployed to guard the San Rafael reservoir, which provides 70 percent of the water in Bogota. **AP**

Woman testifies against ex-Yugoslav president

THE HAGUE, Netherlands—Ajmane Behramaj said she last saw her 6-week-old son alive when Serb troops shelled a convoy of Kosovo Albanian women and children after expelling them from their village and sending them on a forced march to Albania.

The first woman to testify in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic recounted before the UN war crimes tribunal a tale of despair that began when soldiers raided her native Izbica village in the first days of Nato's 1999 bombing campaign.

"I was a mother of five, now I am a mother of four," said Behramaj, 32.

For the first time in his trial—now in its third week—Milosevic voiced sympathy for a victim.

"I am sorry the witness lost her baby but I have to ask her some questions," the former Yugoslav president said as he began cross-examining the woman.

Behramaj was alone with her children because her husband, a Kosovo Liberation Army rebel, had fled to the mountains. On March 28, Serb police and soldiers besieged Izbica, shelled it for two days, then stormed it and subsequently separated women and children from the men, she said.

The women were then ordered to leave for Albania.

"We left everything behind in the village. We went just on foot," Behramaj said, describing how Serb police escorted the column of 3,000. As they made their way uphill, they saw Izbica in flames. Two elderly disabled women were left behind on a tractor-trailer and were burned to death, she said.

"They could not walk so they burned them on the tractor with all their belongings," Behramaj said.

Half an hour later, shells "came from above," splitting the convoy. In the melee, Behramaj was separated from two sons and her sister who carried the baby.

"I heard from my sister after the war that the baby had died," she said. "There was nothing to feed him."

Behramaj's group hiked from village to village for six days until eventually making it to Albania. Once she returned, Behramaj heard her husband was one of 202 ethnic Albanian men from Izbica killed by Serb soldiers.

Eyes downcast during most of her testimony, Behramaj's hoarse and subdued voice masked her emotional turmoil.

During cross-examination, Milosevic attempted to ask Behramaj about rebels in the Drenica region, known as the heartland of the guerrilla movement. **AP**

Expensive meal costs bankers dear

LONDON—One summer evening, six bankers celebrated a business deal with dinner at a London restaurant. Several hours and three bottles of Chateau Petrus later, they had run up a bill of more than $60,000—according to Guinness World Records, the most expensive meal per capita ever.

It's unlikely they're still celebrating. Today, five of the diners—employees of Barclays Capital, the investment banking division of Barclays bank—have reportedly lost their jobs, and the sixth is keeping a low profile.

The Petrus restaurant released details of the bill to the media after the extravagant meal last July. But on Tuesday night, staff at the lush, low-key dining room in London's St. James's district said politely but firmly that they were not allowed to speak to the media about this issue.

According to the restaurant, the party spent $62,679, most of it on wine, including a bottle of 1945 Chateau Petrus Bordeaux priced at $16,500; a $13,400 bottle of the 1946 vintage; and a bottle of the 1947 Petrus at $17,500. The dinner was rounded off with a dessert wine costing $13,100.

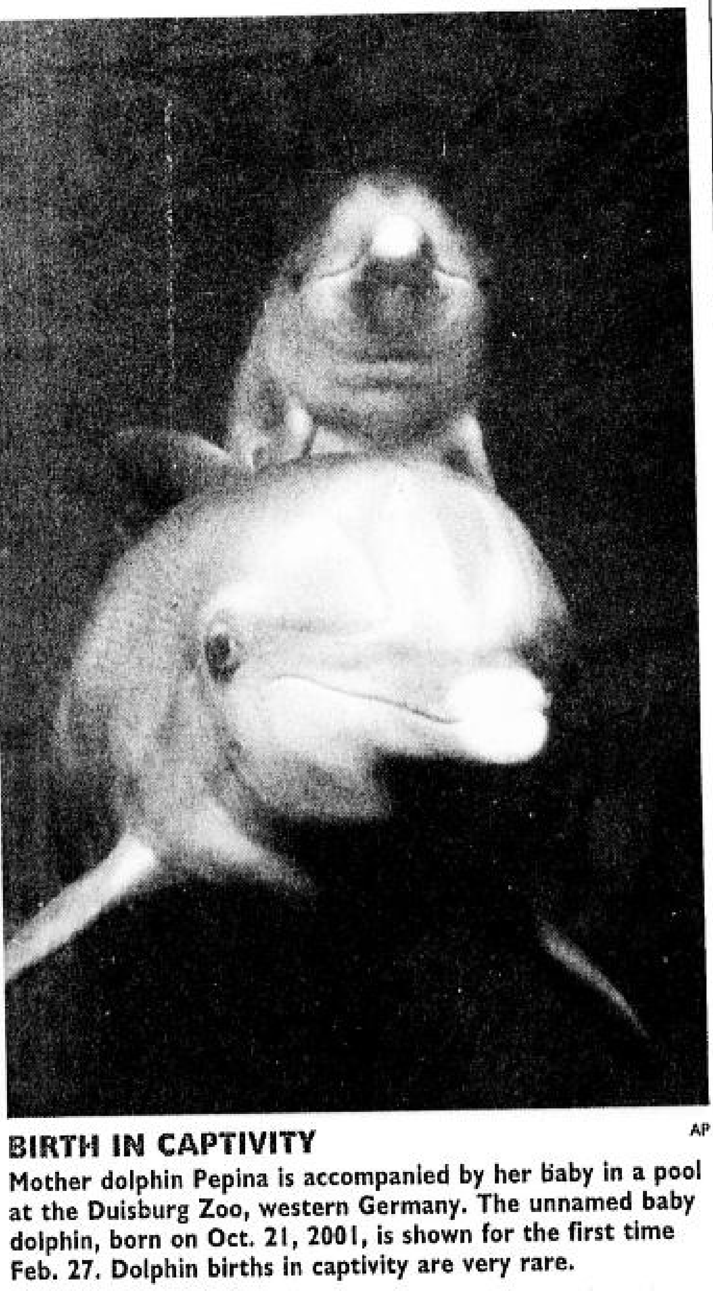
The Michelin-starred restaurant, whose signature dishes include John Dory in mussel and tomato sauce and duck confit ravioli, did not even charge the party for the several hundred dollars worth of food it consumed.

Customers come to Petrus, named for the Bordeaux vineyard that supplies much of its wine, to eat fine food—and, especially, to drink fine wine.

Among the vintages being offered Tuesday on the 21-page wine list are a 1961 Petrus at $17,800 and a 1928 vintage at $16,500.

Tom Forrest, a wine expert at London wine museum Vinopolis, said the bankers chose well. The combination of clay soil and careful tending makes Petrus wines among the most sought-after in the world, and the vintages from the mid-1940s are especially valued.

"It is recognized as one of the great wines of the world," Forrest said. "And 1945 was a strong vintage in Bordeaux, partly because it was the Liberation vintage—it was a very good summer, and people were happy when they were making it." **AP**



AP

BIRTH IN CAPTIVITY

Mother dolphin Pepina is accompanied by her baby in a pool at the Duisburg Zoo, western Germany. The unnamed baby dolphin, born on Oct. 21, 2001, is shown for the first time Feb. 27. Dolphin births in captivity are very rare.

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Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

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Sayyaf leaders want to give up, says governor

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar said Abu Sayyaf leaders based in Tuburan town have sent surrender feelers.

Akbar said he received the feelers four days ago from Abu Sayyaf leaders Suhod Tanajalin and Sattar Yacub, who have at least 30 followers.

Akbar said the bandits could no longer endure the hard life in the jungles of Basilan, including the pressure given by the presence of American troops in that province.

But the bandits, he said, set the granting of amnesty as a condition for their surrender.

But the governor said even if he would grant the amnesty to the would-be-surrenderers, "we cannot prevent those people that they abused from filing a case in court."

Aside from Tanajalin and Yacub, Isnilon Hapilon and two of his brothers, Sahinon and Bakil, who are operating in Maluso and Lantawan, have also sent surrender feelers airing the same conditions.

Isnilon reportedly has 20 followers.

"All these feelers were expressed verbally by some village officials who went to my office three to four days ago," Akbar told the INQUIRER.

But the military sees the surrender feelers as the bandits' "tactical move" to ease pressure made by the pursuit operation, Col. Alexander Aleo, the 103rd Army Brigade chief in Basilan, said.

Meanwhile, Maj. Julieto Ando, spokesperson of the 6th Infantry Division based in Cotabato, said about 15 Abu Sayyaf members under the leadership of Mohammad Haype has established a sanctuary in Barangay Datu Dani in Maasim town in Sarangani.

"But they are inactive right now. They are not doing anything against the government, but we keep on monitoring their movement," Ando said.

US troops conducting war games with Filipino soldiers are apparently trying their best to win the hearts and minds of the people of Mindanao amid continuing protests against their presence.

In Isabela, Basilan, children are given lessons on theater by the American troops.

Lt. Col. David Maxwell, commander of the US 1st Special Forces Group, said they have started the preparatory stage of a theater arts project, which is aimed at teaching Basilan children the art of acting.

Maxwell told the INQUIRER that part of the project, aimed at honing the acting talents of children 15 years and below, is the nightly showing of film adaptations of classical plays, such as the King and I.

He said the theater arts project is only one of the many components of the Balikatan 02-1.

"We also engage in other productive activities focused on community building," Maxwell said.

Sgt. Jeffrey Johnson, who is responsible for the film showing project, said the project would become an interactive learning process, benefiting both Basileños and the American soldiers.

"Basically to share our culture with the Filipinos and at the same time, learn from them," he said explaining the idea.

Johnson said teaching young Basileños would also help them.

Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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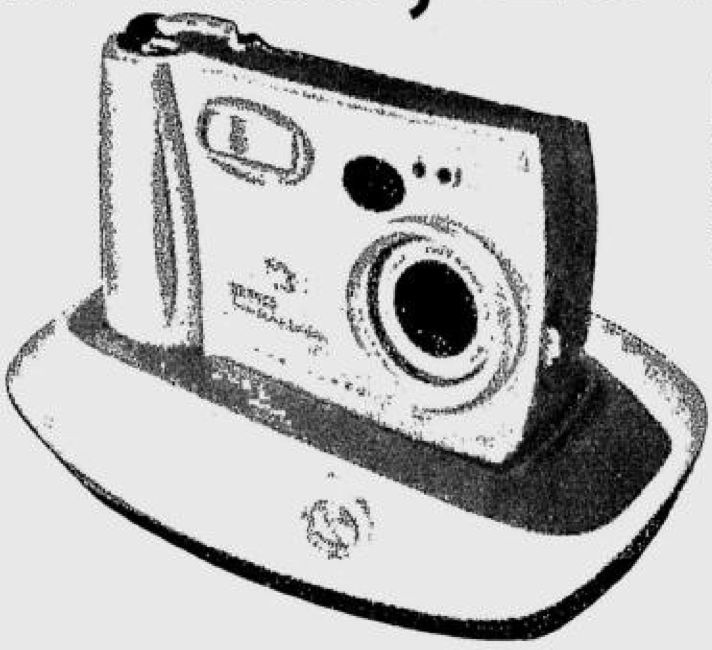

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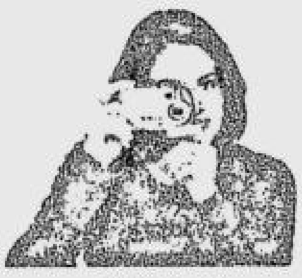

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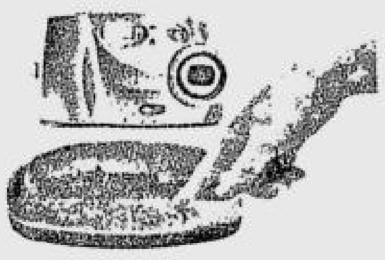

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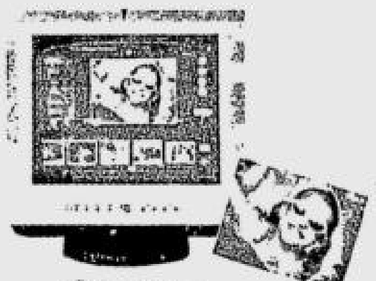

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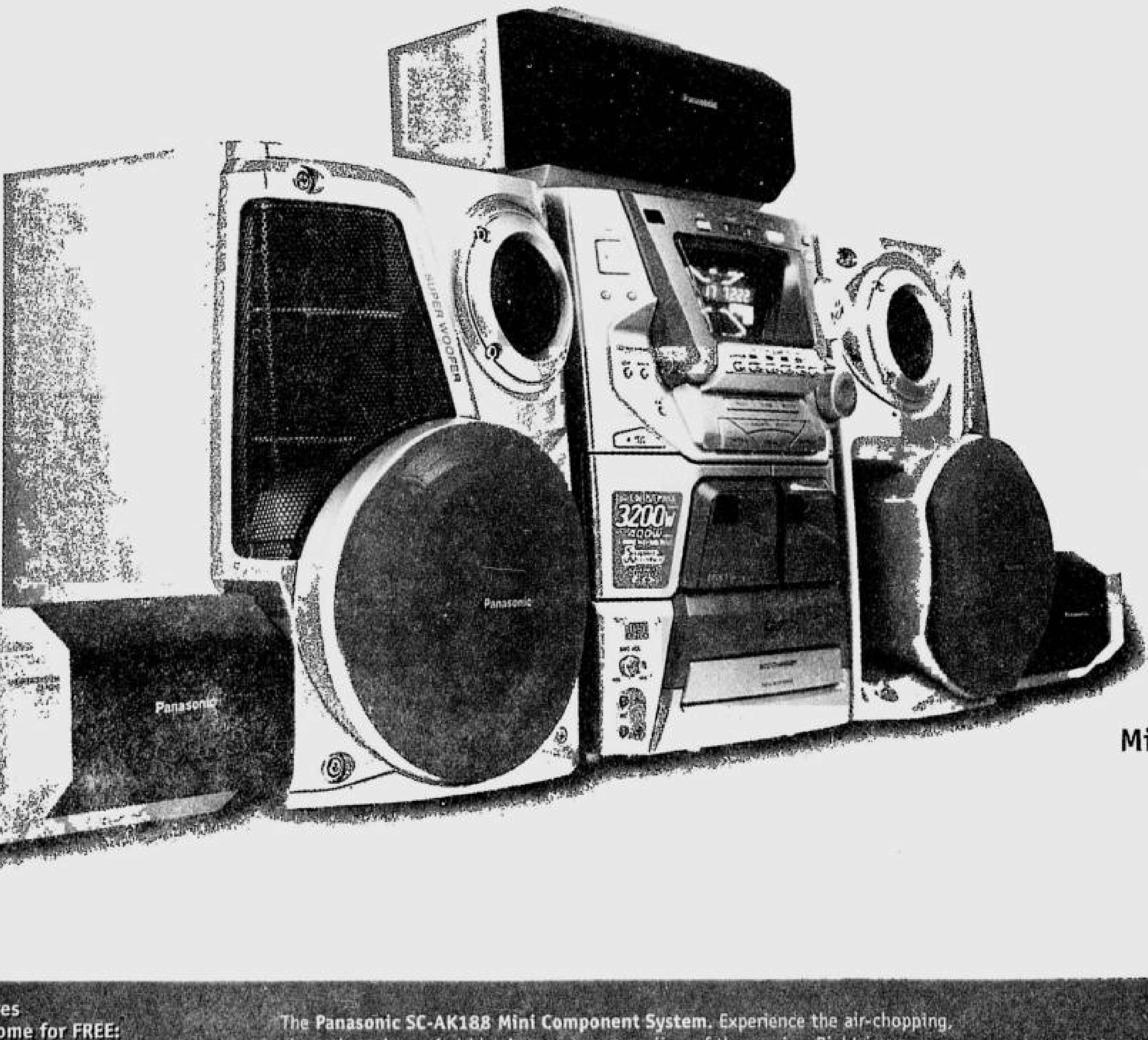

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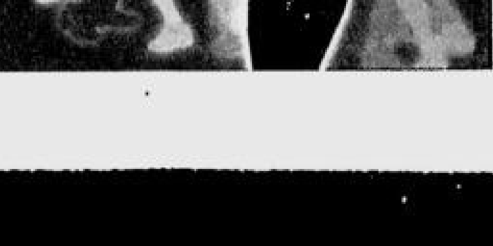


CLARK CONTAMINATION

Water in former US air base safe, say officials

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Government officials converting this former United States military air base into one of the country's largest industrial havens announced that "Clark water is safe" amid claims by a retired military official that water sources here were contaminated with toxic wastes.

"The quality of water in Clark has passed the Philippines' national drinking waters (standard)," said Emmanuel Angeles, Clark Development Corp. president and chief executive officer, in a statement sent by electronic mail to the INQUIRER.

The assurance, the first that Angeles made since January last year, sought to allay fears among Clark's 311 investors and more than 70,000 workers that water in the former US air force base was contaminated.

He said the disclosure of retired Air Force Col. Rodolfo Alfonso, published by the INQUIRER on Friday, might have raised doubts on the safety of Clark's water.

Alfonso, the CDC's traffic management consultant between 1995 and 1998, is sick with neuropathy, an ailment that has paralyzed his legs.

Alfonso said he believed that he got the virus from the former base's polluted tap water and raised concern for the health of CDC employees.

Juan Miguel Fuentes, CDC environmental management division chief, said that since the Weston International completed its environmental baseline study in 1997, the CDC has "closely monitored all of the contaminated sites and, more importantly, the quality of the groundwater that serve as the main source of drinking water of the economic zone."

Fuentes said the study, done in response to reports of deaths and diseases from residents around the base, showed that there were "14 sites in Clark where the ground was contaminated by different common hazardous pollutants."

These, he added, included petroleum products, pesticides and other hazardous substances used in the normal operations of a military base. The contaminants also include hazardous waste materials and related chemicals.

The CDC, Fuentes said, ensured that these areas are "isolated and are not leased out to investors in the economic zone."

Mitigating measures, according to him, were done to "prevent (the) further leaching of the soil contaminants."

The groundwater baseline study, on the other hand, identified "certain deep well sources that are contaminated, mostly by pesticides."

"These wells were immediately plugged and sealed off from the whole water supply system," Fuentes said.

"The monitoring of the water quality basically include weekly potability tests and full chemical analysis every quarter," he said.

Angeles said that within the year, the CDC would start the cleanup of the Wagner Aviation Area, lying south of the housing area where Alfonso lived on the first year of his stint in Clark as traffic management consultant.

Wagner, according to Fuentes, is contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), a known hazardous substance commonly used as insulation fluid in electrical transformers.

The US Environmental Protection Agency listed PCBs as a "probable" human carcinogen that attacks the liver and digestive tract system.

The fight for the cleanup of Clark and Subic, which were used for decades by the US military, has reached the US Congress but has made little progress.

Groups have been demanding compensation for victims of toxic wastes in Clark, mostly children who were afflicted with leukemia and other forms of cancer. ***Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers mostly over the Eastern section. source: pagasa

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hi31° Lo 21°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Hi 25° Lo 13°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 18°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 21°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 21°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 19°
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 24°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 23°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 24°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 24°
Tacloban	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 24°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 24°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 24°
Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 22°
Davao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 24°

Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research/02/28/02

ROUNDUP

3 killed in smash-up

LUCENA CITY—A six-wheel cargo truck lost its brakes while traversing a portion of the Maharlika Highway here Monday morning resulting in an eight-vehicle smash-up that killed three persons and seriously injured nine passengers and two drivers. Police identified the fatalities as Melvin Quinto, 33, resident of Tayabas, Quezon; Herminigildo Arcilla, 78, and Clarita Jao, 50, both residents of Barangay Isabang, this city. The face and body of Quinto, an ambulant vendor who was rolled over by the killer truck as he crossed the street, was mangled almost beyond recognition. Arcilla and Jao died while being treated at the United Doctors Hospital. Police said driver Ernesto Sampang Jr., 31, of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, lost control of the truck when it reached the junction in Barangay Isabang. It smashed into a mini truck, a Toyota Corolla sedan, five passenger jeepneys, and a private jeep and crashed into several rows of *buri* trees on the right side of the road. An eight-year-old boy and his sister, 11, were taking a bath when one of the passenger jeepneys bumped by the truck was thrown into their direction. The boy is still in serious condition in a hospital after a steel bar was removed from his chest. Sampang is now detained at the city jail here.
Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Another dead OCW

VICTORIA, Laguna—Her relatives and friends here mourned the violent death of a domestic helper who had been employed in Kuwait for about seven years. The death certificate issued by the Ministry of Health in Kuwait identified the dead OCW as Aurora Amoranto Javier, 50, who allegedly died of multiple broken pelvic bones resulting in severe bleeding and shock as a result of a "traffic accident." Javier, who has five children and is separated from her former husband, died on Jan. 12 at the Al-Mubarak Hospital in Kuwait, a report said. A relative who requested anonymity, said nobody in Kuwait took responsibility for the death of Javier whose body was kept in the morgue for several weeks. It took a consul from Western Africa, Ningning Rebong Gonzales, a native of this town, to facilitate the transport of Javier's remains back home.
Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Best barangays in Bulacan

MALOLOS, Bulacan—Five barangays in the province were awarded the Gawad Galing Barangay for 2001 for their outstanding community projects. Gov. Josefina de la Cruz presented the awards to Barangays Sta. Isabel in Malolos, Caingin in Meycauayan, Minuyan in Norzagaray, San Vicente in Sta. Maria, and Real de Cacarong in Pandi. Each of them received P200,000 cash prizes and plaques from De la Cruz.
Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Binallay-Afufusi Festival

ILAGAN, Isabela—The local government staged the three-day "Binallay-Afufusi Festival" last week to showcase this town's native delicacies. Mayor Delfinito Albano said the festival, aside from featuring the *binallay* (a rice cake wrapped in banana leaves) and *afufusi* (an Ibanag term for corn harvest), also featured the traits of Ilagan folk as industrious people. Albano said *binallay*, a native glutinous rice cake with sweet brown sauce, is a well-loved delicacy and snack among Ilagan people. Blessida Diwa, regional tourism director, said the festival would promote Ilagan as one of the top tourist destinations in Cagayan Valley.
Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Burned man found

BAGABAG, Nueva Vizcaya—Residents here found the charred remains of a man in a ravine near the national highway in Barangay Baretbet here on Tuesday. Police said the body was the third to be found in the area in three weeks. Police said residents saw two men aboard a car throw a large traveling bag into a 40-meter ravine at Sitio Kinacao in Baretbet. When they checked the bag's contents, residents found the man's remains, police said.
Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Communist guerrillas threaten to execute 4 'spies'

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The New People's Army would try through court martial the four suspected government spies whom the guerrillas are holding in captivity should the government decide to continue with military operations in Sultan Kudarat and four other provinces.

Luis Jalandoni, chair of the National Democratic Front negotiating panel, said it appears that the reluctance of the Macapagal administration is a manifestation of its desire to let Sgt. Jeremias Rosete, Pepito Simbulan, Wilfredo Maldecir and Herminia Sorongon "to continue spying on the NPA while in custody."

Jalandoni said the government's hesitance in suspending military operations in Cotabato province, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, Davao del Sur and South Cotabato, was derailing the release of Rosete and his three companions from the custody of the Valentine Palamine Command of the New People's Army.

The NPA has earlier set as a condition for the hostages' release the suspension of military operations in these provinces.

Rosete and his colleagues were captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on Sept. 4 last year by the NPA's Front 74 under a certain Ka Jerome on suspicion that they were involved in the military's covert operations.

Jalandoni said the NDF would recommend the withdrawal of the release order for Rosete and the three other prisoners of war unless the suspension of military offensive is put in place.

Silvestre Bello III, chair of the government peace panel, expressed optimism early last week that the four captives would be released soon after Bishop Dinualdo Gutierrez of the Diocese of Marbel in Koronadal City met and discussed with government officials the suspension of military operations in the five provinces.

But Bello disclosed that during the meeting, the group only identified at least 11 towns where military operations may be suspended.

Although the government and the National Democratic Front have entered into a new round of peace talks, the negotiations are stalled following accusations by both camps of insincerity.

As the talks drag on, clashes continue between government troops and guerrillas.

On Saturday last week, two suspected New People's Army rebels were killed in an encounter with Army soldiers in Barangay Sapang Bato, Angeles City.

The clash broke out at 7 a.m. Saturday and continued until the afternoon in pursuit of wounded rebels, according to Brig. Gen. Alberto Braganza, chief of the Army's 7th Infantry Division.

Soldiers from the division's 24th and 69th Infantry Battalions clashed with 12 members of the Sandatahang Yunit Propaganda of the NPA command in western Pampanga, Braganza said.

The slain rebels have yet to be identified, he said.

Five high-powered firearms were recovered from the encounter site. No civilians or Army soldiers were reported hurt.

In Catanduanes, the military is pursuing a band of rebels who held captive for about 30 hours 11 workers of the First Catanduanes Electric Cooperative and later released them after the workers allegedly paid revolutionary taxes.

Maj. Jose Broso, Armed Forces Civil Relations Group Southern Luzon head, said Army Col. Pedro Tabangay, 22nd Infantry Battalion commander, has dispatched the crack unit under his command to conduct an airborne operation against the rebel lairs in the northern part of Catanduanes Island.

Broso said military intelligence officers have identified two NPA camps in the area, one in Barangay Panuto, in Pandan town, the other in Caramoran.

He identified the leader of the NPA who abducted the Ficelco workers as Bartolome Mendoza (not Medina as earlier reported), alias Ka Bart and a certain Ka Greg, a resident of Barangay Mabini in Caramoran town and a newly recruited rebel.***Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

VAL HANDUMON

THE OTHER SIDE

A sector of society in favor of the ongoing war games involving American and Filipino troops in Basilan turned up in Zamboanga City last weekend to display their support for the exercises. Among those who joined the pro-war games rally was a boy who lit candles in the city's rotunda.

NPA owns up killing of drug suspect in Ormoc

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

ORMOC CITY—The New People's Army (NPA) has owned up the killing of a suspected big time drug pusher, Iñaki Guljuran, inside a cockpit here Feb. 10.

But police authorities expressed doubts over the claim of the rebel group belonging to the NPA's Mt. Amandewin Command, saying it was unlikely for the communist group to confiscate the personal belongings of the victim after killing him.

Guljuran, in his early 50's, was shot dead by a lone gunman in the back of the head on Feb. 10. The lone assailant took Guljuran's cellular phone, P3,200 in cash, a .45 cal. pistol, and a gold bracelet.

The NPA's Mt. Amandewin Command sent a statement to the local media in Ormoc claiming responsibility for Guljuran's killing.

The statement said the victim was killed after he was found guilty by a "revolutionary court" on Jan. 5, 2001 of alleged crimes against the people of Ormoc City and Leyte.

"The confiscation of his belongings was part of the sentence," the statement said. "This is even (a) small thing (to pay) for his sins against the revolutionary (movement) and to the victims of his illegal and immoral activities," said the statement.

But Senior Insp. Gerard Train, Ormoc City assistant police director, said he doubted the supposed involvement of the NPA in Guljuran's killing.

"The victim has so many enemies, so we really doubted the claims of the NPA," he told the INQUIRER.

Black bugs infest 1,500 has. of Leyte rice farms

By Cynthia A. Borgueta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—The Department of Agriculture has reported black bug infestation in 1,559.25 hectares of riceland in the 23 towns and cities of Southern Leyte and Leyte provinces.

Of the total number of hectares affected, the bugs destroyed about 14 hectares of rice plantations, the same DA records showed.

Joel Pedraza, DA senior agriculturist, said the presence of black bugs was first detected in January last year in Libagon town, Southern Leyte.

Since that time, Pedraza said the black bugs infestation quickly spread to other municipalities in Southern Leyte and Leyte provinces.

Records at the DA regional office showed that Libangon town was the worst hit by the black bug infestation, with 212 hectares of its rice farms infested by the bugs.

The other affected towns in Southern Leyte were Sogod (388 hectares), St. Bernard (372), Tomas Oppus (49), Malitbog (18), Hinunangan (1.5), Macrohon (50), Bontoc (28), Lilo-an (2.75), San Juan (26), Hinundayan (1), Anahawan (1) and Silago (1).

Nine hectares of rice plantations were affected by the black bug infestation in the capital city of Maasin.

In Leyte, the most affected towns were Mahaplag (121 hectares) and Albuera (111). The other affected areas were Ormoc City (35) and the towns of Abuyog (53.5), Baybay (34.5), Javier (25), Bato (10), McArthur (6) and Hilongos (5).

The rice black bug is a bullet-sized insect, with a body length of 8 to 9 millimeters. The bugs eat the plant in all stages especially the vegetative parts like the leaves, flowers and other green portions of the crop.

Leo Caneda, DA regional executive director, wrote to Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor on Feb. 15 to inform him about ongoing operations to stop the infestation.

He told Montemayor in his letter that the staff and personnel of the crop protection center implemented light trapping technique using a device which, he said, is effective in annihilating a large number of rice plant pests. The black bugs are attracted to bright lights.

Caneda said his office also released 241 bags of metarrhizium, a fungus that eats black bugs, to the affected towns.

DAR finds P50 fine solution to tardiness

By Cynthia A. Borgueta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Eastern Visayas have found a solution to the habitual tardiness of its employees—a P50 penalty every time they come in late for the flag raising ceremony.

The imposition of the fine started on Jan. 28 for all employees assigned at the Operation Division and Administration section.

Antonio Tan, administrative officer of DAR-Eastern Visayas, said long overdue change among the rank and file employees of the agency was finally realized after the office implemented its policy of having them pay a fine of P50 whenever they came in late during its Monday's flag raising ceremonies.

An additional P15 fine was also imposed for an employee who would show up for work not wearing the proper uniform. The DAR has four sets of uniforms--a Filipiniana-inspired uniform on Mondays and three other sets of uniforms for Tuesdays to Thursdays. (Fridays are declared wash days and the employees can wear their favorite attire on these days.)

Since the policy was implemented on Jan. 28, not one of the 112 DAR personnel assigned at the regional office in Sto. Niño Extension in this city had been late for the 8 a.m. flag ceremony, Tan said.

The employees were also in their best attire—*barong tagalog* and black long pants for men and Filipiniana dress for women. The attendance was also perfect, he said.

Prior to the imposition of the fine, Tan complained of poor attendance and habitual tardiness among his subordinates.

"After, we imposed the penalties, everything changed. We are now more disciplined," he said.

Tan said the amount that would be raised from these penalties would be used as "revolving funds" for each of the 15 divisions under the administration and operations section of DAR region 8 office.

Also, all division chiefs have agreed to give a token or a gift for their subordinates who would be the first to arrive and wearing the complete uniform.

Employees who report in complete uniform throughout the week will also be given a gift. The gifts are either food items or fashion accessories.

Calamity funds down to ₱800M; Congress urged to pass new law

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—With the national calamity fund dwindling from P2.5 billion three years ago to P800 million this year, Congress should pass the bill allowing local governments to use the 5-percent local calamity funds for pre-disaster activities, according to retired Maj. Gen. Melchor Rosales, National Disaster Coordinating Council executive director.

Rosales said local governments could not rely all the time on the national calamity fund because "it has considerably gone down." "The 5-percent local calamity fund becomes more important then," he said.

Under the Local Government Code, however, this fund, which is derived from local revenues, should only be used after the actual disaster has struck.

Local officials have complained that this provision has constrained them from pursuing disaster preparedness activities and has limited their responses to relief operations, Rosales said.

House Bill No. 221, authored by Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, addresses that concern and other efforts in managing disasters.

Co-authored by Reps. Charity Leviste (Oriental Mindoro), Bellaflor Angara-Castillo (Aurora) and Narciso Monfort (Iloilo), the bill has been with the House committee on national defense since last week, Rosales said.

The bill seeks to streamline and strengthen the government's disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention capability.

It also seeks to replace Presidential Decree 1566, which created in 1978 the national program on community disaster preparedness.

The bill proposes to expand the national disaster management council from 19 to 29 agencies and two non-government organizations. It also sets up an insurance fund and P10-million compensatory benefits for disaster volunteer workers.

While the old disaster management law was silent on unlawful acts, Zubiri's bill cites and penalizes these. These include the "resale, hijacking, non-delivery or diversion of relief goods, equipment and other aid commodities."

The bill also bans the re-packing of goods and other materials and making false claims on the source of these. The bill also prohibits the use of false or inflated data for fund requests for emergency assistance or livelihood projects.

According to Rosales, the proposed expenditure schedule of the 5-percent local calamity fund can help solve the "limited capacity of search and rescue teams nationwide to respond to emergencies."

This can also solve the lack or absence of permanent emergency medical service (EMS) practitioners in the provincial, city and municipal levels and the inadequate equipment of EMS teams like ambulances.

Improving the disaster management capabilities of local government continues to be a vital task, Rosales said.

The NDCC said at least 302 natural and human-made disasters occurred last year, with damages estimated at P9.223 billion. ***Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Masbate villagers feast on beached whale

RESIDENTS of San Pascual, Masbate led by former mayor Amado Lazaro view the whale they beached after they failed to return it to the deep portion of the sea. PHOTO COURTESY OF JOMA AGUILAR

NAGA CITY—It was a feast more than enough for an entire village.

A five-ton whale that beached in Barangay Laurenti in San Pascual, Masbate on Feb. 14 (not Feb. 10 as earlier reported) was butchered by residents.

Townsfolk who ate the whale meat said it tasted like carabao meat.

Amado Lazaro, former town mayor of San Pascual town, said yesterday that until now, the people in this island-town still have supplies of dried whale meat.

The residents have also extracted seven drums of oil from its head and body.

But Lazaro said some people were hesitant to eat the whale meat while the others did not bother to get some.

Lazaro said most of the town residents feasted on the carcass of the whale, which the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources regional office in Pili, Camarines Sur had no knowledge of.

On Tuesday, the INQUIRER called up the BFAR regional office and was answered by a certain Paulino Bernales who introduced himself as a marine fish capture specialist.

Bernales said no report reached his office about the beached and butchered whale in San Pascual.

According to the fishermen in San Pascual, the beached whale went astray from three other bigger whales while playing in the seas off the Burias Island.

The five-ton whale was beached until efforts to bring it back to the deep failed.

The islanders butchered the whale but preserved the bones to reconstruct them. ***Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

'MORAL CRUSADE'

Church takes on sex trade in Pangasinan town clubs

By Yolanda Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BASISTA, Pangasinan—This town's parish priest and seminarians on Tuesday led a prayer-rally against prostitution and held Mass in front of a videoke bar which the priest claimed was a front for prostitution.

While Fr. Manuel Sayson, the town's parish priest, was offering Mass, owners of the Palayan Videoke Bar and Restaurant played their videoke machine and sang, banged their doors and shouted invectives at the protesters.

Later, the owners and staff of the restaurant threw water at the protesters.

"There is no prostitution here. You pray in the church, not in front of our establishment," bar owner Miriam Tulagan shouted through the videoke machine's microphone.

Tulagan claimed her operation was legal because she had a permit from the mayor's office. However, the permit that Tulagan showed to reporters was for 2001. She said she was not able to get a permit for this year because Sayson asked Mayor Raul de Guzman not to issue her one.

Sayson said he led the prayer-rally because many videoke bars in the town double as prostitution dens.

"We are deeply concerned and affected by what is happening to the local folk with the alarming proliferation of prostitution (dens) in the town," he said.

Tulagan, however, belied Sayson's claim, saying the priest was getting back at them for reporting him to the police earlier.

Tulagan claimed that Sayson went to the bar in early February, got drunk and asked for a guest relations officer (GRO) to join him.

When no girl approached his table, Sayson threw his weight around, prompting Tulagan to report the incident to the police.

Sayson said he went to the bar to check if prostitution really existed.

"I was with a seminarian and a policeman, and we ordered a bottle of beer each so how can I get drunk?" Sayson said.

Insp. Leonardo Tabelin, town police chief, dismissed Sayson's claim that prostitution was rampant in the town.

De Guzman asked the bar owners in the town to first talk with local Church officials and settle the dispute before they renew their permits.

"We are regulating these bar-restaurants, and there is no prostitution (in those establishments)," De Guzman said.

Last year, Sayson wrote to local officials about the existence of beerhouses, lodges and inns in the town, saying these were "accessories to the promotion of prostitution."

"If we say that they contribute to the revenue of the town, we have to remember that the end does not justify the means (and that) not everything legal is moral," he said.

6 inmates escape in Bohol after Cebu jailbreak

CEBU CITY—Less than 24 hours after the jailbreak in Cebu City's Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center (BBRC), another jailbreak happened in Carmen District Jail in Bohol.

Six prisoners who have pending cases of murder to robbery, bolted the jail last Monday evening.

But jail guards on duty discovered the jailbreak in the midnight of Feb. 26.

The six escapees were Jaime Jenapas, 21 of Alicia town, charged with murder; Gerry Ribuyon, 22, of Carmen town, charged with frustrated murder; Felix Sitoy, 44, of Dimiao town, charged with robbery; Tomas Llanto, 31, of Pilar town, charged with theft; Tirso Cutin, 17, of Sevilla town, charged with highway robbery; and Pito Calamba, 28, of Carmen town, charged with physical injuries.

Carmen District jail warden Senior Insp. Arnel Peralta headed the BJMP personnel in hunting the escapees.

Bohol Provincial Police Office Director Senior Supt. Sancho Bernales also ordered the police in Carmen and nearby towns to also help in recapturing the six escapees.

Cebu City police also monitored the ports for the possible arrival of the escapees, said CCPO director Senior Supt. Lani-O Nerez.

Jail Officer 1 Menchito Damgo who was the guard on duty from 4 p.m. of Feb. 25 until midnight also helped in the manhunt.

According to another jail guard, JO2 Bonifacio Plaza, Damgo had two back-up guards during his shift.

But Plaza said, it was Damgo who should really watch the activities of the prisoners.

There was no word yet from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) if Damgo and other jail guards will be investigated and sanctioned for the jailbreak.

BJMP assistant regional director Diony Mamaril could not be reached for comment.

But when the jailbreak happened in BBRC last Monday morning, he immediately sacked warden Ernesto Abella.

Plaza said the six prisoners escaped through the dilapidated window of cell No. 1.

Plaza said the prisoners, without the knowledge of the guard on duty, detached the cell's window grill.

But Plaza defended his colleague, saying it's really difficult to detect movements in the cell unless the guard went to the back of the building.

He said the Carmen District jail has three detention cells that accommodate 23 prisoners.

He said the cell of the escapees was at the rear portion of the building.

The building which the district jail occupied was used to be the police station then of the town.

It was the reliever guard, JO1 Candelario Geroy, who detected the escape.

Geroy said when he assumed his post around midnight, he immediately conducted a headcount to find out that the six prisoners in cell No. 1 were missing.

Geroy said he alerted his colleagues that the six prisoners had escaped.

Geroy said they also reported the incident to the Carmen police who immediately deployed personnel to conduct the manhunt operation. ***Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Ex-Leyte congressman dies of lung cancer

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Former Leyte Rep. Alberto Veloso died of lung cancer at the National Kidney Institute in Manila on Feb. 24. He was 72.

His body was flown to Tacloban City about 7:45 a.m. yesterday on board a Philippine Airlines plane. His wife Clarita fetched his remains from the Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport.

The white casket bearing his body was immediately brought to the Sangguniang Lalawigan Building. The provincial board then passed a resolution, extending condolence to Veloso's family and at the same time recognizing his contributions as a leader of the province.

At 2 p.m., the casket was transferred to his house in Villaba town, about 120 kilometers north of this city. The family has yet to schedule his interment.

Violeta Veloso described her father as "very generous man, soft-spoken, humble and a good provider to his family."

"We will sorely miss him. Up to the last time, he never complained to us (even) while he was under medication at the NKI," she said.

She added her father stayed at the NKI for almost four weeks until he finally died of cancer on Sunday.

Violeta is executive director of the Committee Affairs Department that oversees all committees at the House of Representatives.

The other siblings are Rey Albert, William, Clarissa and Edgar, a former vice governor of the province. Leyte Rep. Edward Veloso of the third district is the nephew of the former congressman.

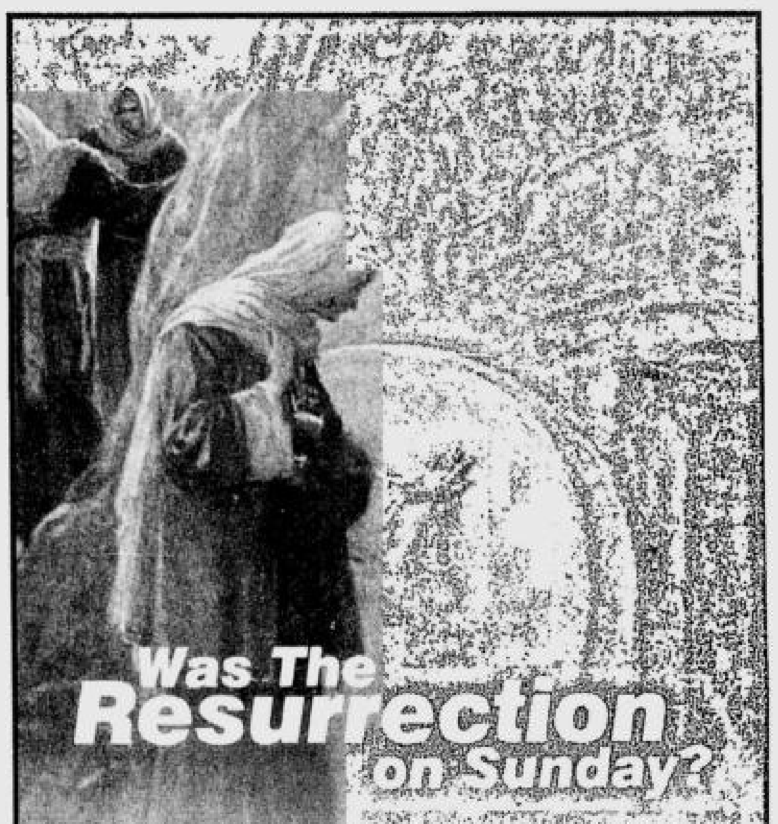
Veloso practically served the three branches of the government.

A year after passing the 1965 bar exams with a 90.15 rating, Veloso was appointed as a municipal judge in Mati, Davao del Sur.

In 1960, he entered politics in his native Leyte by running for mayor of Villaba. He won and held the position as Villaba mayor for five years.

In 1964, he was elected as Leyte vice governor with Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez as the governor.

Then President Ferdinand Marcos appointed Veloso in 1970 as assistant judge of the Court of Industrial Relations, the forerunner of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC).



Was The Resurrection on Sunday?

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NAME
ADDRESS

Erap dismisses lawyers

From page A1

Pacifico Agabin, Felix Carao, Raymund Fortun, Cleofe Verzola and Delia Hermoso.

Estrada came to this decision following a meeting with lawyers in his detention suite at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City, according to "TV Patrol."

An ABS-CBN program, "Isyu," happened to be taping a court-approved interview with the deposed President at the time.

Fortun told "TV Patrol" that Estrada was already contemplating such move as early as January after the Supreme Court created a special Sandiganbayan division exclusively for his criminal cases.

Estrada said the special court was apparently a "first" in the country's judiciary.

He also complained that his cases were being tried with undue haste ("*parang minamadali*") which in turn "generates public perception that I'm already guilty although there's still a lot of evidence to be presented (in my defense)."

Court-appointed lawyers

Renato Bocar, spokesperson of the Sandiganbayan special court, said the trial would proceed as scheduled despite the mass dismissal of Estrada's lawyers.

"If you will recall, the 3rd Division (which originally handled the plunder case) had previously appointed three lawyers from the Public Attorneys Office (PAO) to represent president Estrada. That remains effective and in force," Bocar told court reporters.

Bocar was referring to the opening hearing on Oct. 1, 2001 of the plunder case that Estrada reluctantly attended without his lawyers.

The court then appointed PAO lawyers Jefferson Toribio, Melita Lauron, and Silvestre Moseng to represent Estrada in that hearing.

On Tuesday, the Sandiganbayan directed Estrada and Jinggoy to start looking for new lawyers should their counsels make good their threat to withdraw from their cases.

The threat came after the anti-graft court announced late Tuesday that it would hold hearings thrice a week starting March 18, a schedule that Estrada's lawyers bitterly opposed.

In an order, the special Sandiganbayan division said it had taken notice of "declarations" made by the Estrada lawyers that they might quit if forced into a tight schedule.

"In this regard, (the Estradas) are hereby directed to engage the services of other lawyers to represent them should all their present counsels eventually decide to withdraw with their consent," the order said.

If the Estradas fail to do so "despite the opportunity given them," the court "will be compelled to appoint de officio counsels for them."

The court has notified Jose Jojo Moya of the Public Attorneys Office of Quezon City to be ready for such eventuality and to designate PAO lawyers "who can competently defend the Estradas."

In justifying the new schedule, the court explained that it was trying cases of "great national concern where one of the accused is no less than the former highest official of the land . . ."

Estrada, who is accused of the capital offense of plunder and detained for almost a year now, "must be assured of swift and certain justice to which he is entitled," the court said.

The special division said it "is merely giving 'teeth" to provisions of the 2000 Rules of Procedure which calls for "continuous trial on a weekly or other short-term trial calendar . . . so as to ensure speedy trial."

New witness

Also at the Sandiganbayan yesterday, state prosecutors in the Estrada plunder case presented a new witness—Arturo de Castro, vice president for operations of the Philippine Clearing House Corp.

One of the justices, Teresita de Castro, voluntarily inhibited herself for the duration of the testimony of the new witness, who happens to be her brother-in-law.

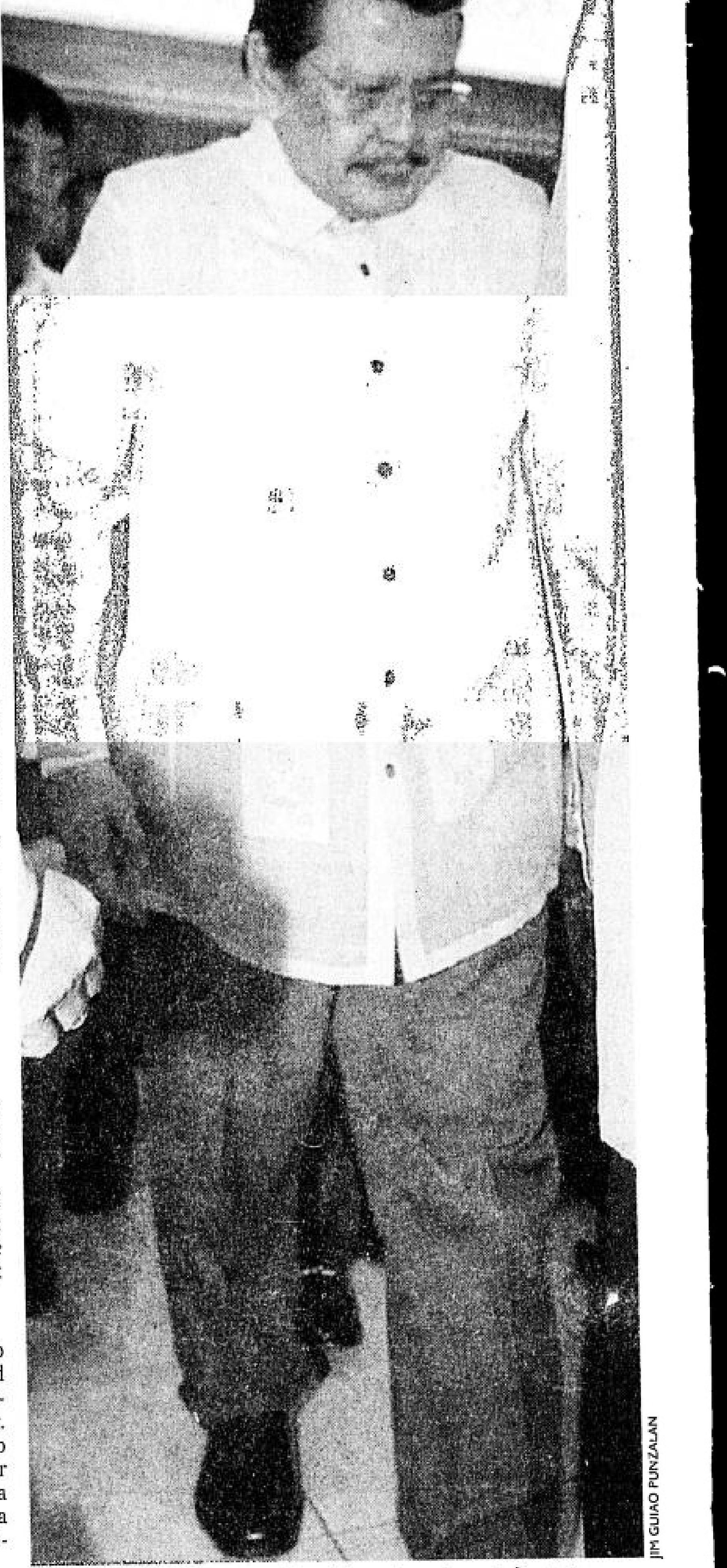
As the defense panel invoked *delicadeza*, Justice De Castro willingly yielded her seat to an "alternate," Justice Ma. Cristina Cortez-Estrada (no relation to the accused).

De Castro's testimony mainly called for his identification of documents showing that PCHC cleared a Far East Bank check worth P189.7 million for deposit to the Equitable PCI Bank Greenhills-Ortigas Bank on Nov. 9, 1999.

The witness made no mention of the owners of the accounts.

But prosecutors claimed that the check was first drawn from the Far East Bank account of Estrada's friend Jaime Dichaves, and deposited into the "Jose Velarde" account of Estrada with Equitable PCI Bank.

The check, it was alleged, represented Estrada's commission from the sale of Belle Corp. shares to the Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System in October 1999.



JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

END of the road? Deposed President Estrada arrives at the Sandiganbayan for his arraignment over his alleged illegal use of Jose Velarde as an alias in signing a bank document.

Erap refuses to enter plea in 'Jose Velarde' case

From page A1

name Jose Velarde as a form of "guarantee" to convince the man he described as the real owner of the bank account, Jaime Dichaves, to lend money to businessman William Gatchalian.

The bank documents are also among the evidence in the more serious charge of plunder, or massive corruption, for which Estrada and Dichaves face the death penalty.

In pain

For his 9 a.m. arraignment yesterday, Estrada arrived about an hour and a half late. His lawyers said he was in severe pain due to his osteoarthritic knees.

The justices asked him whether he wanted to remain seated while the charge against him was being read. Clad in *barong* and khaki pants, Estrada had to be helped by defense lawyer Jay Flaminiano in getting off his seat.

Before the reading of the charges, defense lawyer Rene Saguisag made last-ditch attempts to defer the arraignment for a week by contesting the court's Feb. 26 ruling junking Estrada's motion for reconsideration.

Saguisag asked the court to just have the "alias" proceedings "synchronized" with that of Estrada's arraignment for his second perjury case on March 6.

"This is the final straw! We don't believe we can get justice in this court," Saguisag said, when finally prevailed upon by the division chair, Associate Justice Minita Nazario.

Railroading

Saguisag said the case was already being "railroaded."

Nazario warned him: "Please be careful with your language. We are respecting you as lawyers so we also expect respect from you. Don't use that language."

Asked by Nazario to cite an instance of railroading, Saguisag pointed to the court's Feb. 26 ruling which affirmed its rejection of Estrada's motion to quash.

"This ruling is one of conviction," Saguisag said.

In the motion, Estrada lawyers contend that the alias case should be dismissed since prosecutors could not support the charge that the accused used the alias Jose Velarde in "several transactions" and in a "public and habitual" manner.

The information only cites an instance on Feb. 4, 2000 in Malacañang when Estrada signed as Velarde on several documents of Equitable PCI Bank, according to defense lawyers.

"They (prosecutors) don't know of any other instance apart from Feb. 4," Saguisag reiterated in court.

But the court's Feb. 26 ruling, penned by Justice Teresita de Castro, upheld the view that the documents signed by Estrada as Velarde on Feb. 4 constituted "public and habitual use of alias."

The documents also pointed to the alleged "several transactions" in which that alias was used by Estrada, the ruling said.

The court noted that the documents that Velarde signed on Feb. 4, 2000 as presented in the charge "refer to two accounts" and a "trust account" under that name.

Habitual

"The opening and maintenance of the above-mentioned two accounts . . . and trust account by Jose Velarde are not isolated transactions. They imply continuity and habituality and public use of the name Jose Velarde in whose name or for whose account two funds were opened, and maintained and/or managed for investment," the ruling said.

In an interview after the arraignment, Saguisag continued to slam the ruling: "If you look closer into that resolution, that's already in itself a basis to convict him (Estrada) on the basis of documents that have never been seen" by the defense or marked as evidence.

In Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo said her predecessor's admission that he signed bank documents as Jose Velarde bolstered the credibility of the "star witness" in the impeachment trial, Clarissa Ocampo.

"To begin with, we didn't doubt the testimony of Clarissa Ocampo. So it just bolstered her testimony," she told reporters over lunch.

She found incredulous the claim of Jesus Remulla, spokesperson of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino, Estrada's party, that it was Ocampo who made Estrada sign the documents using a false name.

"*Di sana noon pa yun na ang sinabi nila* (If that were so, then they should have said that before)," the President said.

Ocampo, former Equitable PCI Bank vice president, testified at the impeachment trial that she saw Estrada sign his bank account documents as Jose Velarde.

No lesser penalty

Ombudsman Aniano Desierto said Estrada's admission would not, in any way, reduce his penalty once found guilty of plunder.

"It will not," said Desierto, who stressed that the jailed former President should instead make a plea of "guilty" if he wanted a lesser penalty of life imprisonment.

"If he confesses to the crime that will lessen his penalty since it's considered a mitigating circumstance by the court," said Desierto, lead prosecutor in the plunder trial of Estrada.

He made the suggestion as he maintained that the prosecution could win a judgment of conviction even without Estrada's confession.

"Besides testimonial and voluminous documentary evidence, we even have the specimen signature of Jose Velarde," he said.

Desierto said Estrada could change his plea for the plunder charge at any stage of the trial.

It was the Sandiganbayan third division that entered a plea of "not guilty" for Estrada after he refused to do so during the arraignment last year.

However, Desierto said Estrada's lawyers would never allow the ousted leader to change his plea.

"I doubt it. But if he really wants a lesser penalty, he should (do it)," the Ombudsman said.

He also maintained that Estrada's confession during an interview aired by ANC News Channel on Monday was a blunder.

"For us (prosecution panel) it was a blunder," said Desierto, who stressed that the confession had strengthened considerably the plunder case.

Not a slip

But a supporter of Estrada in the House of Representatives expressed belief that his admission that he signed bank documents as Jose Velarde was not a slip.

"I don't think he would do it for no reason at all," said Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, author of a resolution signed by 136 House members seeking to allow Estrada to have his knee surgery in the United States.

Dilangalen said Estrada would not commit the blunder of making self-incriminating statements.

"He's a very intelligent guy. He would not make statements that would incriminate himself," Dilangalen said.

He confirmed speculations that Estrada's surprise admission was a strategy to avoid conviction for plunder. ***With reports from Dona Pazzibugan, Michael Lim Ubac, Juliet L. Javellana and AFP***

Indon terror suspect admits planning Rizal Day bombings

From page A1

der and multiple attempted murder filed by the Philippine National Police against Al-Ghozi.

Al-Ghozi admitted to authorities and to the six-member DOJ panel that he helped fund the rash of bombings that hit Metro Manila on Dec. 30, 2000.

The near simultaneous explosions also destroyed a Light Rail Transit (LRT) coach in Manila, a passenger bus in Quezon City, a gas station on Edsa and Pasay Road and an air cargo warehouse at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

"The truth is, I was the one who planned and carried out the bombings in which many died, injured and (several properties) destroyed," Al-Ghozi said.

4 affidavits

The PNP filed charges against Al-Ghozi only in connection with the LRT bombing. But the suspect owned up to all the Rizal Day bombings in four separate affidavits.

Al-Ghozi told the six-member DOJ panel led by Senior State Prosecutor Peter Ong yesterday that he executed the affidavits "voluntarily" with the help of his lawyer, Florimond C. Rous.

The panel did not allow the suspect to subscribe or formally swear by his affidavits since he said he did not know their contents "in detail."

ERIK ARAZAS

SUSPECTED Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi is brought to the Department of Justice under heavy guard.

Ong said the panel would still consider the affidavits. He also declared that the case had been deemed submitted for resolution.

Al-Ghozi corrected an earlier confession he made that he was in Cebu when the bloody carnage rocked Metro Manila.

"I was here in Manila with a (certain) Muklis, Paks and Salman," he said as he reiterated the confession he made in an affidavit dated Feb. 16.

Muklis, Paks and Salman are still at-large.

Witnesses had said it was Muklis, also known as Hadji Onos, who left a bag in an LRT coach shortly before an explosion ripped through the LRT's Blumentritt Station.

In his affidavit, Al-Ghozi disclosed that he and three others planned the Metro Manila bombings inside the house of Muklis in Marawi City.

"We discussed the military attacks on Muslim rebels' camps (in Mindanao)," he said. "(So) to be able to retaliate against the military (which was staging the attacks upon orders from the Estrada administration), I planned to sow bombings in Metro Manila as part of our *jihad*."

He, however, clarified that he did not intend to kill innocent civilians. "I told Muklis that if it is possible, no one should be hurt."

Funding

Al-Ghozi said he gave a total of P250,000 to Muklis whom he described as a member of the MILF. The money was used to buy 70 kilos of explosives in Cebu, he said.

The DOJ earlier filed charges against Muklis, along with his alleged cohorts, Sammy Arinday and a certain Colonel Torres, before a regional trial court in Manila.

Al-Ghozi said the grant of financial support to Muklis' group was approved by "Pais," his Malaysian-based superior, because they were similarly engaged in a *jihad* or holy war. Pais' real name is Fais Bin Abu Bakar Bafana, he said.

Muklis, according to Al-Ghozi, told him later that the bombs would be brought to Manila.

He said he preferred the attack to be staged inside the Naia, "but it was up to Muklis if they have other targets."

According to DOJ state prosecutors, Al-Ghozi is a member of the Jama'ah Islamiyah (JI), a regional terrorist organization based in Malaysia which seeks to create through a *jihad* a separate Muslim state encompassing southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and southern Philippines.

The JI's 63-year-old leader, Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (Bashir), is being portrayed as the "Osama bin Laden of Southeast Asia."

The PNP-IG alleged that bomb components were seized from Al-Ghozi, but the suspect denied the accusation.

On Feb. 19, state prosecutors dismissed charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition filed by the PNP-IG against Al-Ghozi because of the police agency's failure to submit "physical evidence" to strengthen its case.

"The law enforcement authorities merely presented photographs of the alleged explosive components," State Prosecutor Geronimo L. Sy said in a four-page resolution.

Passports

But the DOJ filed charges of violation of Republic Act No. 8239 or the Passport Act of 1996 against Al-Ghozi before a Zamboanga court. Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno approved the filing of the charges upon Sy's recommendation.

Al-Ghozi yielded two Philippine passports under the names of Randy Adam Alih and Sammy Sali Jamil, which were surrendered to the PNP-IG, as well as an Indonesian passport.

In his affidavit, Al-Ghozi said he had traveled several times to the Philippines and Indonesia since 1996 to "get contacts" for the "holy war in Mindanao."

Al-Ghozi claims to have been born in Indonesia, but according to Octavino Alimudin, second secretary the Indonesian Embassy in Manil, his government had yet to ascertain the suspect's real nationality.

Al-Ghozi speaks Filipino but he preferred to answer questions during yesterday's preliminary investigation with the help of Alimudin.

IBF okays Lewis request

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—The International Boxing Federation on Tuesday approved a request by heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis to fight ex-champ Mike Tyson in his next fight. Lewis needed permission from the IBF to fight Tyson instead of Chris Byrd, the IBF's No. 1 contender. Byrd's bid to block a Lewis-Tyson fight was denied by Chief United States District Court Judge John Bissell. *AP*

SPORTS

Editor **Al S. Mendoza** ◉ *Assistant Editor* **Edwin M. Villanueva**

SPORTS ON TV

Compiled by Lorenzo Mangulat

GOLF: PGA Tucson Open, Final Round at 2 p.m. (r), Tour Highlights at 11 p.m. on Star Sports

POOL: Rack 'Em Up - Fong Pang Chao vs Johl Younger at 7 p.m. on ESPN

BASKETBALL: US NCAA - Wake Forest vs Georgia Tech at 5 p.m. on ESPN

NBA at 10 p.m. on NBN 4

Assisi, LPC score

By Roy Luarca

ROXAS CITY—Metro Manila bets St. Francis of Assisi and Las Piñas College asserted their might over separate opponents yesterday to barge into the semifinals of the 56th National Students Basketball Championships at the Dinggoy Roxas Civic Center here.

ASSISI/A19

PAL INTERCLUB

Canlubang provisional leader

Championship first round uncompleted due to darkness

By Al S. Mendoza

BACOLOD CITY—Defending champion Canlubang took the provisional lead yesterday behind huge 30-plus points of its 1-2-3 punch in the darkness-stopped first round of the 55th PAL Interclub here.

No. 1 Juvic Pagunsan made 31 points, No. 2 Tommy Manotoc 32 and No. 3 Abe Rosal 35 as Canlubang tabbed home 98 points, 7 points ahead of CAP-Southwoods in Round 1 at Binitin's Bacolod GCC in nearby Murcia.

CAP-Southwoods' players with similar 18-hole outputs were Hanson So Jr. with 33, Jun Jun Plana with 32 and Artemio Murakami with 26.

Luisita, the third force in the three-cornered fight for the title, was at 83 on Anthony Fernando's 30, Mark Fernando's 26 and Gene Bondoc's 27 in the five-to-play, four-to-count format giving 3 points to a birdie, 2 to a par and 1 to a bogey.

But CAP-Southwoods could deliver a big punch against Canlubang today when Angelo Que, already with 30 points to his name, completes his last two holes at Bacolod GCC.

Erwin Vinluan, CAP-Southwoods' fifth man for the day, was at 23.

Canlubang's Jun Bernis had 26 after 16 holes yesterday and Ronnie Torrecampo 25. Luisita's Emilio Tuason was at 26 and Marvin Dumandan 24.

CAP-Southwoods' Que and Vinluan will tee off at 6:30 a.m. together for their last two holes at Bacolod GCC, together with Canlubang's Torrecampo and Bernis and Luisita's Tuason and Dumandan.

"It's a good, good start for us," said Jeric Hechanova, CAP-Southwoods manager. "Hanson (So) was a revelation. He is our No. 10 player but look at him. He stood his ground against Tommy (Manotoc), who is easily Canlubang's No. 2 behind Juvic (Pagunsan). We learned our lesson last year when we lost the title right in the first round with a bad, bad start."

Canlubang's Torrecampo was thoroughly smothered by Que, whose finishing two holes today should produce big points to push CAP-Southwoods nearer to Canlubang.

MANOTOC: 32 points for Canlubang.

JESS YUSON

"I wasn't surprised with Luigi's (Yulo) move to field in his top three players in Pagunsan, Manotoc and Rosal," said Hechanova. "He wanted to post an early big lead. But fortunately for us, we held on. We didn't field in a strong starting five. As in basketball, we played zone, man-to-man. This is just the first quarter, you know. The real battle will be in the last nine holes. That's when we will go man-to-man."

Hechanova said his five today will be led by No. 2 Jerome Delariarte, No. 3 Cookie La'O, No. 4 Juami Rocha, No. 7 Montito Garcia and No. 9 Lyndon Barril.

Canlubang's Yulo, unpredictable as ever, has not divulged his five for today. His yet-to-play players are Dave Hernandez, Rolando Viray, JR Taninco, Boyet Zaragosa and Solomon Gines.

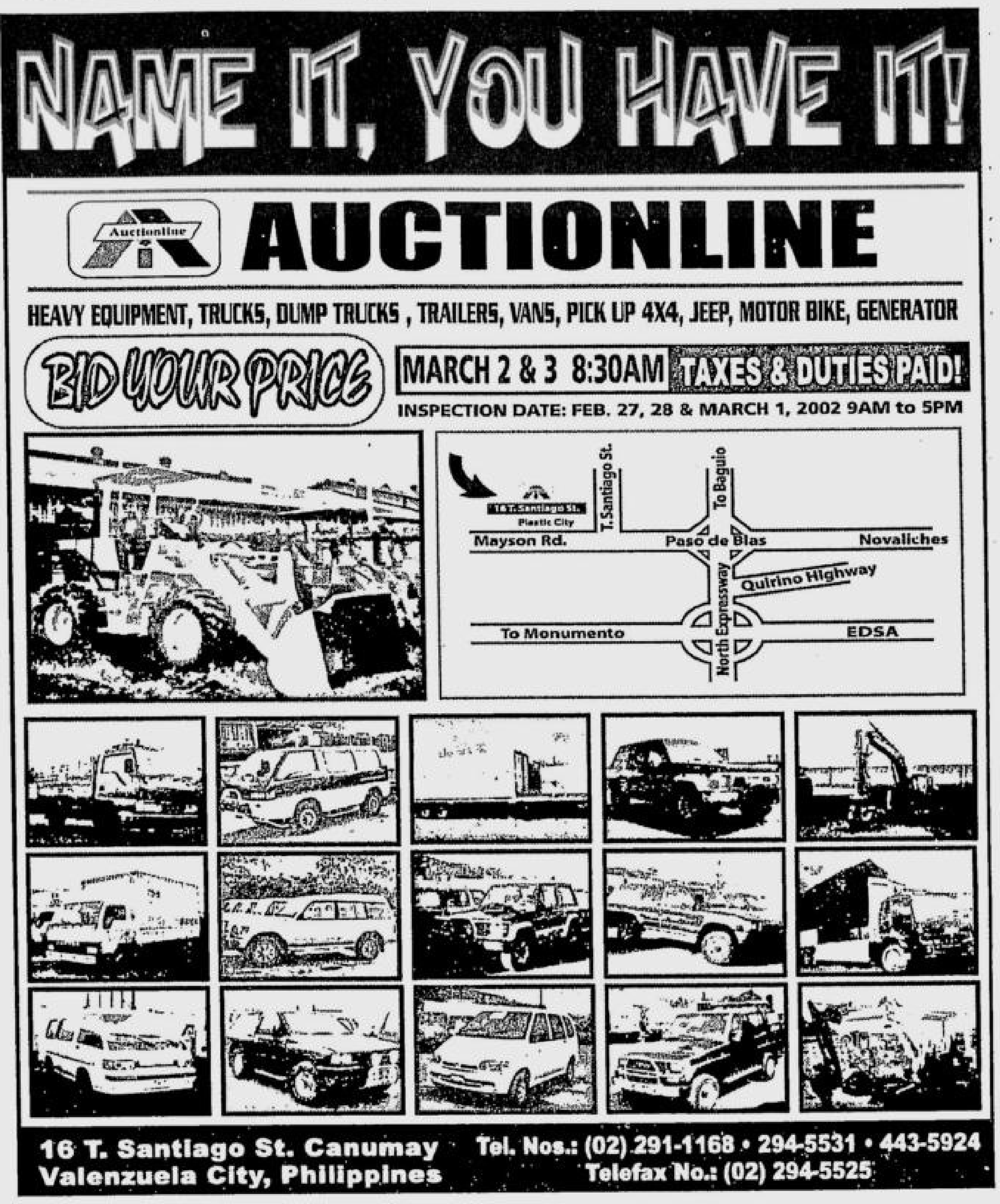
"I'm not worried with his lineup for Round 2," said Hechanova. "We are not into match-up yet. We're playing the course as usual."

In the Founders Division, Forest Hills (Jong Laput 31, Ronald Littawa 31, Teboy Javier 27, Levi Marcelino 26) took a slim two-point lead with its 115, followed by Manila Golf (Alex Prieto 31, Manny Chan 29, Richie Garcia 29, Octavio Espiritu 24) with 113. Third was Cebu with 107.

Guinhalaran led Sportswriters with 94, followed by Philippine Navy with 90 and Capitol Hills 82 in the series sponsored by Fortune Tobacco, Boeing, RMN/EI Television, Airbus, NBN/MTV, ABS-CBN Int'l, Smart Communications and Pilipinas Shell.

South Cotabato paced Friendship with 76, followed by Crystal Springs with 71 and Mabuhay 66.

Other backers of the fabled event, among others, are PLDT, Tanduay, Asia Brewery, 96.3 W Rock, Pagcor, UMBN, Century Park Hotel 105.1 Crossover and Mandarin Oriental Hotel.



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7 int'l meets for RP archers

SEVEN international tournaments, topped by the Busan Asian Games in September and October, await Filipino archers this year.

Purita Joy Marino, gold medalist in last year's Southeast Asian Games in Malaysia, is virtually assured of Asiad participation, having secured training support from the Olympic Solidarity Program through the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The other international events in the National Archery Association of the Philippines' calendar of activities for 2002 are:

The 25th Malaysian championship in Sintok Kedah, Malaysia on May 24-27, the Asian Grand Prix (Chongzhou, China, June 19-28), Grand Prix Tournament of Nations (Erlanger, Germany, May 27-June 2) 4th world university championship (Chonburi, Thailand, July 9-15), Busan Test Match (Busan, Korea, July/August), and Masters Games (Melbourne, Australia, Oct. 5-10).

NAAP president Ramon Lim clarified, however, that RP participation in these events except the Asiad will depend on the availability of funds.

NAAP will also hold local competitions such as the national target championship (individual and team) on April 30-May 5 at the PSC archery range in Diliman, QC and the national championship (recurve and compound division) on Nov. 27-Dec. 1 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

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FLIGHT UPDATES

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3rd Prize	Gil Victorio	Bear Brand Pengit Pengit
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1st Prize	Shazam Cesar Ebio	Orchids
2nd Prize	Cyril Villarin	Mountain Blue Bird
3rd Prize	Jerson Tirana	Butterfly Kite
COLLEGE DIVISION - GEOMETRIC KITE CATEGORY		
1st Prize	Samuel Renomeron	3 Diamonds Luzviminda
2nd Prize	Joel Flores	Bear Brand Box Kite
3rd Prize	Marvin Gimang	Giant Merbstar
ADULTS DIVISION - GEOMETRIC KITE CATEGORY		
1st Prize	Warlito Demaluna	Sandatang Pilipinas
2nd Prize	Isabelo Bagavo	Rainbow Flying House
3rd Prize	Salvador Partoles	Bear Brand Box
COLLEGE DIVISION - FIGURE KITE CATEGORY		
1st Prize	Cris Rosales	Flying Beat
2nd Prize	Mambra Donayre	Hornets
3rd Prize	Hercules Salvado	Green Cobra
ADULTS DIVISION - FIGURE KITE CATEGORY		
1st Prize	Angelito Agravante	The Flying Fish
2nd Prize	Diego Esmeña	Tacloban Eagle
3rd Prize	Neil Estrada	Birds In Paradise
SARANGGOLA NI BEAR BRAND		
Elementary	Argie Oquiño	Ghostfighter
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	Angelito Agravante	The Flying Fish

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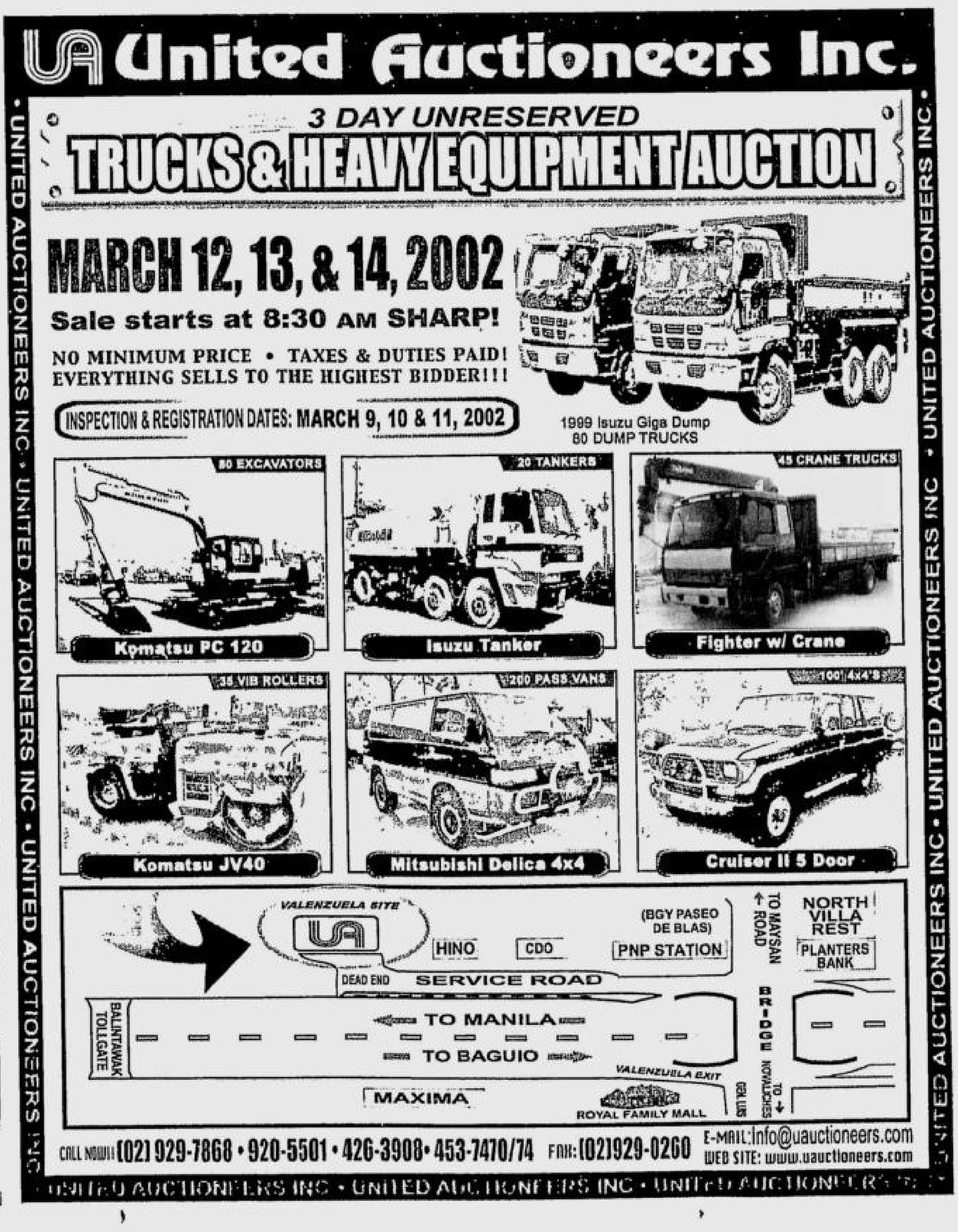

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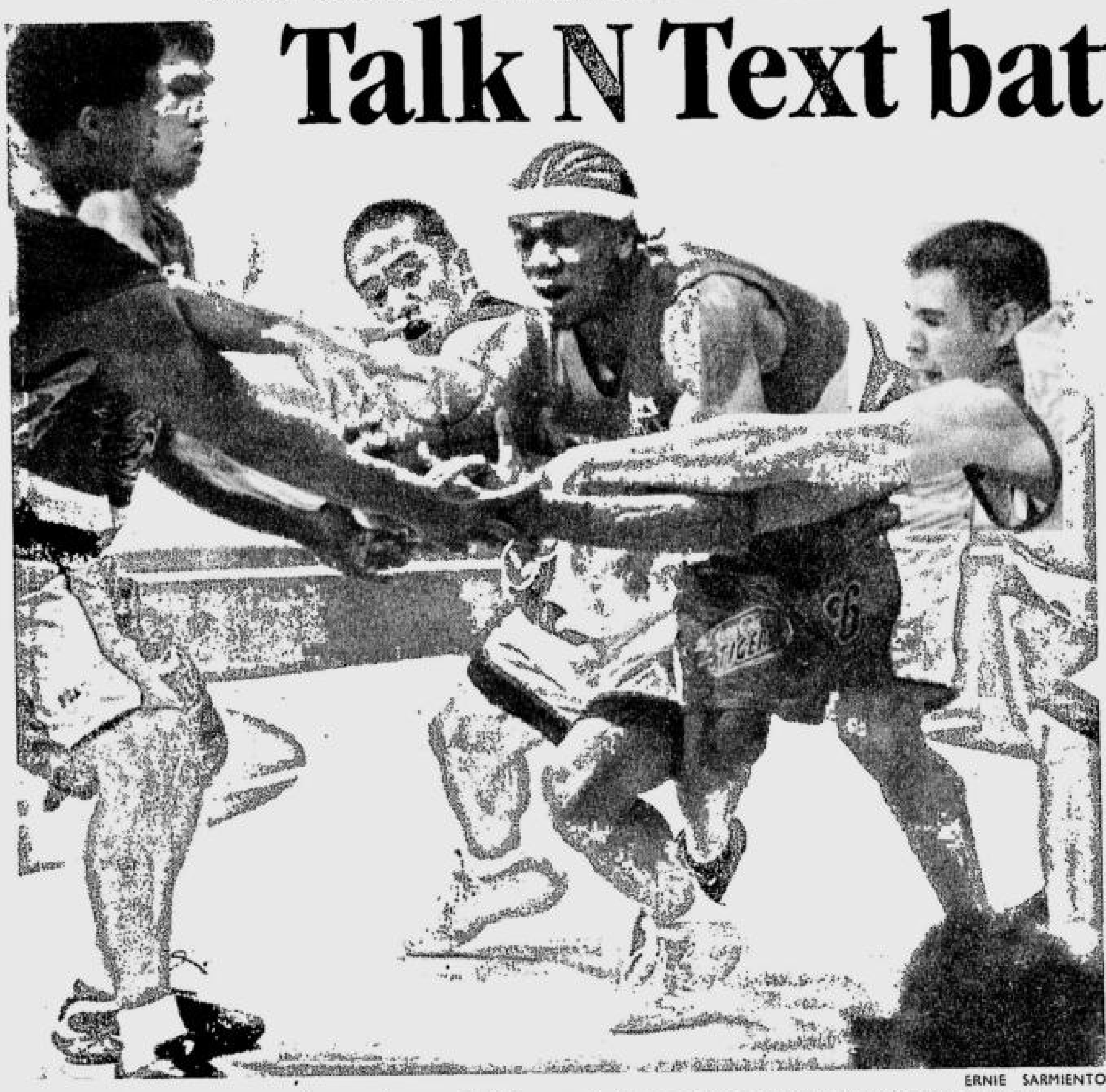
Talk N Text battles San Miguel



ERNIE SARMIENTO

IT'S three-against-two as Hapee-RP Team's Davonn Harp, Boyet Fernandez and Rudy Hatfield battle Coca-Cola's Estong Ballesteros and Rosell Ellis furiously for ball possession during their PBA game Wednesday night. Hapee-RP Team prevailed, 87-77.

Beermen parading new import

STANDINGS

Teams	W	L	Teams	W	L
Purefoods	3	0	Sta. Lucia	1	1
Red Bull	3	0	FedEx	1	2
Alaska	2	1	Shell	1	2
Hapee-RP	2	1	Selecta-RP	1	2
Coke	2	2	San Miguel	0	2
Talk N Text	1	1	Ginebra	0	3

GAME TODAY (Makati Coliseum)
6 p.m.—Talk N Text vs San Miguel

By June Navarro

TALK N TEXT scored the most lopsided victory of the season after crushing the Hapee-RP Team, 95-62, last week in Antipolo City.

The victory came after the Phone Pals succumbed to a 92-89 setback against the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs but that debacle hardly measured the character of American coach Bill Bayno's wards.

All the ire and frustrations generated by that Purefoods' upset were vented on the Hapee-RP Team.

Are the Phone Pals for real? The answer will be made available when Talk N Text faces slumping San Miguel Beer today in the PBA Samsung Governors Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

Tied with Sta. Lucia Realty in the middle of the pack at 1-1, the Phone Pals try to join Alaska and the Hapee-RP Team at the upper half of the standings in their 6 p.m. encounter against the Beermen.

The Aces, following an energy-sapping defeat against league-leader Purefoods, dropped to 2-1, while the Hapee-RP Team recovered by turning back Coke last Tuesday to earn a similar record.

After languishing at the lower flight of the standings, the Beermen will parade a new import, an NBA veteran tasked to alter the misguided fortunes of San Miguel Beer.

Mario Bennett was the Phoenix Suns first-round choice (27th overall) in 1995 and went on to play for the Suns, LA Lakers (97-98), Chicago Bulls (98-99), LA Clippers (99-2000) and Sacramento Kings (2000-01) before bringing his act to the PBA.

Listed as 6-foot-10 but was measured at 6-foot-8, Bennett carries a huge burden of helping Lamont Strothers in pulling the Beermen out of a 0-2 rut.

The Beermen yielded to the Coca-Cola Tigers, 85-79, after taking a bow against the Selecta-RP Team, 64-59, during their debut on Valentine's Day.

O'Neal, Bryant lead LA Lakers

MILWAUKEE—Shaquille O'Neal scored 28 points and Kobe Bryant added 27 as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Milwaukee Bucks 99-89 Tuesday, completing a two-game season sweep.

The Lakers are 4-0 on their five-game road trip, which ends Wednesday in Minnesota.

Derek Fisher added 15 points as the Lakers' bench outscored the Bucks' reserves 27-17. The Lakers committed only five turnovers and went 9-for-19 from 3-point range, with Devean George and Fisher making three each, while Milwaukee was only 4-for-14 on 3 pointers.

Complete results: Seattle 109, Cleveland 89; L.A. Lakers 99, Milwaukee 89; Orlando 112, Chicago 97; San Antonio 99, Phoenix 91; L.A. Clippers 94, Houston 84; Dallas 104, Memphis 91; Sacramento 107, Utah 81 *AP*

Batchoy's paradise of a farm

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

BACOLOD CITY—A weird record was recorded yesterday in the fabled PAL Interclub.

The 55th PAL Interclub blastoff was stopped by darkness, marking the first time that this national golf team championship failed to complete its first round since its inaugurals in 1948.

Two things contributed to the delay.

Because of the record field 45 flights, the tee off was delayed by 40 minutes. The last flight was set for 11:20 at Binitin's Bacolod GCC. It got flagged off at 12 noon.

Bacolod GCC's first hole is a tricky par-3, with both sides marked out-of-bounds.

Juvic Pagunsan, Canlubang's top gun, went OB on No. 1. It triggered traffic.

Today, organizers will avoid No. 1 and instead release the flights on No. 10 to eradicate unnecessary clogging.

Good luck.

■

We normally have dogs for pets, if not cats. Others have birds, if not snakes.

But Jose "Batchoy" Henares beats us all. He has more than one million worms for pets at his backyard.

"I just started this three years ago," he said. "I started with a handful. Now I have a million and one—and counting."

I saw the breeding area of his worms. You think it's yucky?

Think again, fellas. You don't see the worms, unless you dig into their habitat, which is mostly loose soil the color of Arabica coffee.

Like dog-breeders, Batchoy, who is a first cousin of the famous Larry Henares, earns a lot from his worms.

"He has customers from as far as Batangas," said Ramon Uy, a dear golf buddy of mine who brought me to Batchoy's farm. "One of them is Sandy Javier of Andok's. Sandy bought 5,000 of Batchoy's worms last year."

Batchoy's worms, of the African-tropical variety, are now the most in-demand among farmers switching to organic fertilizer. Know why? Batchoy's worms are the chief makers of organic fertilizer today. They have become the subject of research at UP-Los Baños, the object of envy of many environmentalists in the country today.

Batchoy gave me a tour of his 18-hectare farm in nearby Buro-Buro. It was a most educational trip. I saw Batchoy's lush lettuce plantation. His tomato orchard was simply fantastic. The green bell peppers had me salivating. His lanzones trees teem with flowers. Same with his duhat and macopa trees. His garden abounds with herbs, like mint, oregano, basil, taragon and rosemary. Buried in the vast greenery is a tall, white rest house, with a pool beside it. When you stand at the verandah of the house, sitting atop a hill 800 feet above sea level, you have a breathtaking view of the city at night.

When Ramon, of the RU Shredder fame, and I were driving for home in the gathering shadows, I thought I had just left the city's hidden paradise.

■

Pareng Gob Manny Pinol is arriving today to join his Davao Golf Club teammates playing in the PAL Interclub. But before he tees off tomorrow, he wants me to have a round with him today.

"Please arrange a round for me?" he pleaded over the phone yesterday. "I need to warm up."

You got it, Pareng Gob. Tee off is 12:30 p.m. at the beautiful Victorias in nearby Victorias City.

Jordan to have knee surgery

JORDAN

WASHINGTON—Hobbled throughout his comeback by a painful right knee injury, Michael Jordan is taking a break to have arthroscopic surgery.

Jordan was placed on the injured list Tuesday for only the second time in his career. He will have to miss at least five games, starting Wednesday night at home against Portland.

"Michael is very disappointed," Washington Wizards coach Doug Collins said Tuesday. "Michael has not been right since the All-Star break. So much of what we do depends on him and his energy. He hasn't been himself. He's been hurting. He's down about that."

The prognosis won't be known until the team physician, Dr. Stephen Haas, performs the surgery. Jordan committed to play two seasons when he returned to the court last fall.

"He's got to go in there and just find out what's causing the irritation and why his knee is continuing to swell," Collins said. "And depending on how much work he has to do, that will be the deciding factor in how long Michael will be out.

"I think (the surgery) would give him hope for next year. I think he knows that if he didn't have this done, he wouldn't be able to continue to play. More and more, the swelling is coming back. There's something in there that's irritating his knee to make him have the swelling."

Jordan's right knee has been giving him problems since he began workouts a year ago in preparation for his second comeback. The injury initially was diagnosed as tendinitis, and he had fluid drained from the knee at least three times, most recently before a game at Miami on Saturday. He also banged the knee in a collision with teammate Etan Thomas 2 1/2 weeks ago.

Team officials are concerned there might be a more chronic, arthritic condition in the knee.

"If it's a cleanup, hopefully he could be back," Collins said. "If it's something a little more severe, then we'll have to wait and see. You can't just keep sticking a needle in that joint and draining out fluid and then try to play. That's going to continue to irritate that joint." *AP*

JESS YUSON

SENIORS BET

Dr. Bobby Ramos (St. Luke's Medical Center) of Malindang team reacts to his shot during the recent PAL Interclub Seniors tournament in Bacolod City.

Guardo Stars trip RP Youth

CEBU CITY—The Guardo-Pampanga Stars tamed the RP Youth Team, 88-81, and forged a three-way logjam at the top of the Cebu basketball League President's Cup at the Cebu Coliseum.

The Guardo Stars bucked a slow start as they trailed the fastbreaking RP youngsters by five points in the early going before taking the first quarter, 27-17.

The Nationals, however, continued to hound the Guardo stars with their fast plays and outside sniping to threaten at 73-70, entering the fourth quarter.

The RP Youth Team, which is using this tournament as tuneup for the Southeast Asian championship in Thailand in June, absorbed its fourth defeat in as many games.

Guardo-Pampanga is now tied at similar 3-1 win-loss slates with M. Lhuillier and Spring Cooking Oil which encountered contrasting fates earlier in the day.

M. Lhuillier defeated Osaka, 93-81 while Spring suffered its first setback at the hands of ML Kuarta, 82-97.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Jun Matalote and Candie Gonzago tallied 222 and 249 pins, respectively, to snare the singles titles in the Gold Eagle Beer 13th National Open duckpin bowling championships at Manuela 3 Bowling Center in Mandaluyong. Also today in 1990, Rikki DyLiacco timed 37.41 seconds to win the night car slalom at the SM City North Edsa grounds.

SPORTSWATCH

NBC suspends Jayson Williams

TRENTON, New Jersey — NBC Sports suspended Jayson Williams as an NBA commentator until the manslaughter charges against him are resolved, the network announced. Williams, 34, was charged with second-degree manslaughter Monday in the death of 55-year-old limousine driver Costas Christofi. He surrendered to state police and was released on $250,000 bail. Prosecutors say Williams recklessly handled a shotgun at his luxurious New Jersey mansion two weeks ago, killing Christofi. *AP*

Bautista bags jr. chess title

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD Paolo Bautista beat Ramer Prolaje in the seventh and final round to rule the junior division Sunday in the final evaluation tournament of the first series of Milo Checkmate Saturday clinic held at Greenhills Shopping center. A second year high school at La Salle Greenhills, Bautista, one of the clinic's regular enrolees in the intermediate level, forced Porlaje to resign after 38 moves of a Sicilian game to stamp a perfect record of seven wins out of seven rounds of play to claim the junior title in the age-group competition that concluded the clinic's first regular Saturday classes.

Macatangay wins Tamiya race

EFREN Macatangay outlasted his rivals to capture the overall title in the recent Tamiya Manila Racer's Race Cup at GameworX, fourth level of Festival Supermall, Filinvest Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Macatangay, representing Team G, pocketed the P6,000 prize money and a trophy after beating a total of 570 cars entry in the tournament organized and sponsored by GameworX Inc. Mayo Tuano, salvaged the first runner-up title worth P3,000 in cash and a trophy, while Lito Lumibao from team TDK settled for second runner-up and pocketed the cash incentive of P1,000 plus a trophy.

Bumgarners tame karting foes

RACING siblings Mark and Michele Bumgarner of M&M Kart Racing/Castrol opened their respective championship bids in the FSL Junior class on a high note by finishing 1-2 in the class' finals in the opening round of the 2002 Shell Super Kart Championship series held last Sunday at the Carmona Circuit Philippines in Carmona, Cavite. The nine-leg series is sponsored by Pilipinas Shell, Casino Filipino, Smart Zed, Nokia and Coca-Cola Bottlers.

Luzon breeders derby gets under way tonight

THE INTENSE battle of Luzon's well-known gamecock breeders continue as the LGBA 1st Conference 6-Cock Derby gets going tonight at Mandaluyong Coliseum.

Sponsors are Lakpue Drug Inc., Univet, Premium Agrivet and Excellence Gamefowl Supply.

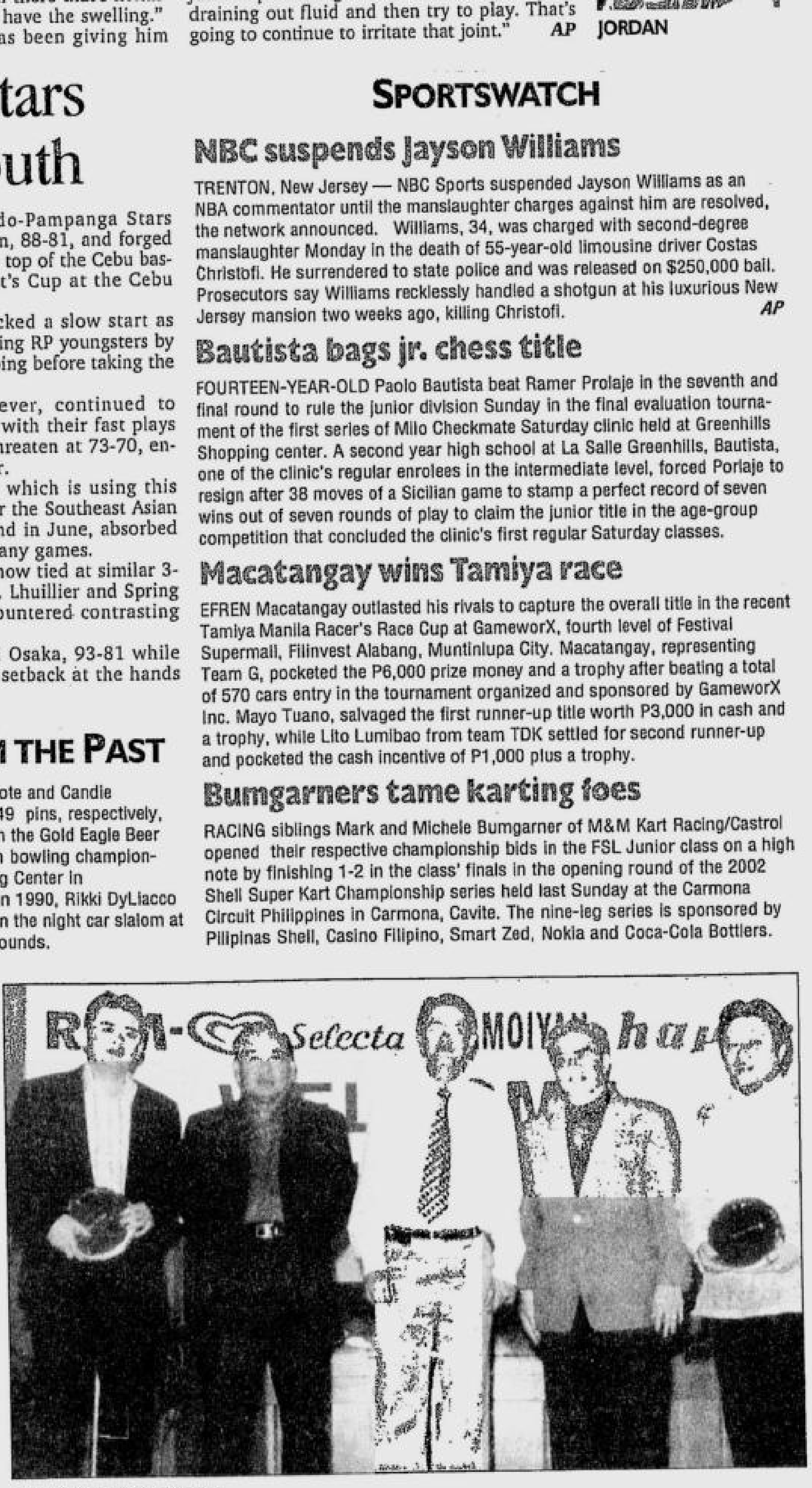
With 60 exciting fights lined up, the derby will start promptly at 6 p.m. with no intermission. Seen to eight fights per hour will be fielded.

The current leaders with two victories each are Tony Galang and William Go (Argga Gold Cup 2), Mario Villamor and Mario Antonio (M2 Chito), Rey Lee (Pitmaster), Peter Uy and Emoy Gorgonia (Jopete Jediking), Mario Siochi (MS Jun), Bitchot Echauz (Ente Farm 2), Romy Tan (Jopete Black Stallion) and Vic Yu (Mandaluyong Coliseum)

Expected to provide tough competition are one pointers like former Congressman Amado Bagatsing (Gladiator Air), biboy Enriquez (Firebird MB), engineer Jun Sevilla (JRS Spectrum), Ram Lopez and Tony Litonjua (Altuz Starwars), Alex Tang and Nelson Co (Guts and Glory), Ricky Castillo (E-68 II) and Mauro Prieto (Anito).

"Every point is important because participants are gunning not only for the championship, but also for the chance to win the LGBA Cocker of the Year award," LGBA president Boy Diaz said yesterday.

Three LGBA derbies will be the basis in selecting the Cocker of the Year winner. The other two derbies will be held on April 23 and 25 (6-cock) and May 28 and 30 (7-cock).



RP TEAM BACKERS

The Philippine Basketball Association awarded plaques of appreciation to the sponsors of the National Training teams, RFM-Selecta and Lamoiyan-Hapee, during a well attended affair held recently at Manila Peninsula. Shown from left are Joey Concepcion of RFM, PBA vice chair Rey Gamboa, chair Butch Alejo, commissioner Jun Bernardino and Cecilio Pedro of Lamoiyan.

‘Blood Red’ rules 3rd Hobie meet

TEAM Blood Red, led by Australian Chris Steilberg, grabbed first place overall in the recent 3rd Philippine Hobie Challenge, besting 14 other sailing teams with a total elapsed time of 33 hours, 31 minutes and 39 seconds.

Second place overall went to co-helms Michael Scantlebury and Peter Davies of Rumpleteazer, while Luigi Manzi and crew Gia Veloso of Team Fil-Italia took third place.

Steilberg and Team Blood Red mates Dave Harris and Krishan George consistently showed fine form in all five legs of this year's event that took place from Feb. 9-16 from Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur to Subic Bay. Team Blood Red also topped the 45-nautical mile Gov. Savellano leg stretching form Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur to San Fernando, La Union.

Other legs

Winners of the other legs were: Sea Trek/Pascal Croly and Xavier Philipon for the San Mig Light San Fernando-Bolinao, Pangasinan leg. Fil-Italia/Luigi Manzi and Gia Veloso for the Isla Channel Bolinao-Hermana Mayor island leg, Cavalier/David Levinge and Norman Jaravata for the Neil Pryde Hermana Mayor to Capones Island leg and Bilis Biik/Haswell and Katigbak taking 2nd and 3rd places respectively.

The event, held under the auspices of the International Hobie Cat Association, was sponsored by the Manila Bulletin, Orient Freight, San Miguel Lite, Neil Pryde, Fragrant Marbour, Isla Channel and supported by the Philippine Sports Commission, Department of Tourism, Philippine Visitors and Convention Corporation, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Ilocos Sur, San Fernando, La Union and Taal Lake Yacht Club.

Standby emergency services were provided for by Lifeline Arrows.

The event was also backed by Del Monte 2002, 103.5Klite, Don Henrico's Restaurant, Tanduay Rhum, Dusit Hotel, Imajica, travel.net and Alumni.net, Legend Reports and Casinos, Sea Park Beach Resort and Camp Hope Beach Resort.

‘Calypso’ tops sieger dog show

CONSISTENT 2001 SG-1 Calypso Schloss Ramsberg captured the coveted V1-Sieger title in the first GSDF Landesgruppen Sieger Show recently at the Quezon City Hall grounds.

Crowd favorite World Sieger SG-22 Iso Zellwaldrand finished a close second spot to claim the Vice-Sieger title.

First pick by German Judge Herr Franz Peter Knaul, the two-year-old German Shepherd dog was presented and handled by trainer Noel Gacula.

Expertly handled by veteran trainer Erwin Tamayo, 200 Siegerin Kessa Piste Trophe romped off with the V1 Siegerin title of the open female class after a close battle with 2001 Siegerin Jassy Oxalis handled by another veteran Rhoel Magundayao.

"Tiptop conditioning, endurance, and movement spelled the difference for the day," said SV Filipino Judge Mario Magsaysay.

"Our German Shepherd standard of quality has dramatically improved during the last three years. Level of competition is even at par or better than Malaysia and Indonesia," said lawyer Jose Sibal, GSDF chair.

Meanwhile, Pilar Urbecke was awarded 2001 German Shepherd Dog of the Year while World Sieger V-12 Xolly Fictenschlag won the Bitch of the Year 2001 award.

Final results:
Male Open Class-24 mos. N abvo—V1-Calypso Scholoss Ramsber, V2-Iso Zellwaldrand, V3-Baer von Bann, V4-Vito of Fairway, V5-Groll Brunnenstrasse,
Intermediate Class—18-24 male SG-1 Fedor Weisenborn, SG-2 Sancho Hoppenhalle, SG-3 Chloes Donner;
Junior Class 12-18 mos. Male SG-1 Chuck von Jo, SG-2 Esko Wolfsigerland, SG-3 Pere Sade Yarok
Female Open Class—24 mos. and above
V1-Kessa Piste Trophe, V2-Jassy Oxalis, V3-Gina Von Bann, V4-Tini of Greenwater, V5-Bagheera Schloss Ramsberg,
Female 18-24 mos.
SG-1 Ugana Huhnegrab, SG-2 Daggi Armadesbrunn, SG-3 Ryalita Du Rhinland;
Female 12-13 mos. SG-1 Usis Vom Monchberg, SG-2 Suse Von Oasis, SG-3 Whitney V. Der Grafschaft

RACING TIPS

At San Lazaro By Mr. 999

Race 1—1. Highly Connected 2. Noah's Arc 3. Bullish View 4. Queen of Less

Race 2—1. Bemedalled Ruler 2. Marginal Note 3. Madam Aida

Race 3—1. Ilocos Queen 2. Velocity 3. Regimental Lass 4. Mahdi's Gold 5. T-Square 6. Exceptionl Charm

Race 4—1. Sexy Royal 2. Jamie's Princess 3. Ladies' Night

Race 5—1. Silent Heat 2. Tayp Ko Yan 3. Raise D Sun

Race 6—1. Royal Vic 2. Timeless Beauty 3. Traktora 4. Silver Gray

Race 7—1. Ong Bee 2. Music N Song 3. Ocean Dream 4, El Magnifico 5. Dynasouls

Race 8—1. D' Greatest 2. Color of the Wind 3. Diligence/Vice Consul

Race 9—1. Guts Pleaser 2. Brenda Star 3. Rose and Toy 4. Regal Reality 5. Suterian Era 6. Justsaywhenjen

No junketeers in Asian Games, says Eric

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NO MORE than 90 officials are entitled for slots in the Busan Asian Games in September if the joint Task Force of the Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Olympic Committee fulfill their promise to limit the roster to 180 athletes.

That's according to POC secretary general Romy Ribaño who added that the sports bodies are following a strict ratio of one official for two athletes, which has been the practice in the past international sports competitions.

However, PSC chair Eric Buhain earlier said more technical people will be fielded in during the Games but there will definitely be no junketeers in South Korea, like in the past.

Ribaño added that the POC is also prepared to spend at least P5 million during the week-long Asiad, on top of the P30 million budget the PSC allotted for the duration of the Games.

The amount, according to Ribaño, will be used to cover the expenses outside of the agreement with the PSC, which will only spend for airfare and accommodation of the entire Philippine delegation.

Meanwhile, Ribaño clarified that the POC doesn't have to recognize the presidency of Rep. Monico Puentevella in the Philippine Weightlifting Association in order to gain legitimacy.

Assisi, LPC score

(From page A17)

St. Francis, defending champion in the collegiate division, trounced Angeles University Foundation, 92-63, while LPC subdued University of Mindanao,86-71, in their knockout quarterfinal duels.

The Doves, striking inside and out, streaked to their third straight lopsided victory in the tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines and supported by Accel, the official outfitter, Burlington Socks and Molten.

LPC, which topped the National Capital Region eliminations, matched St. Francis' record though it encountered stiff opposition from UM in the first half.

Faster and more cohesive, however, LPC soon wore out its foe and pulled away behind the guns of Marty Piodo, Raul Alcaraz and Joel Gragasin. Piodo topscored with 14 points, while Alcaraz and Gragasin added 11 and 10, respectively.

UM drew 16 points from Louie Medalla, but 6-foot-9 Samigue Eman was held to just six points by veteran LPC center Efren Valdez. Contesting the two other semis berths at presstime are University of Visayas and West Negros College and local entry Colegio de Purisima Concepcion and Salazar Institute of Technology.

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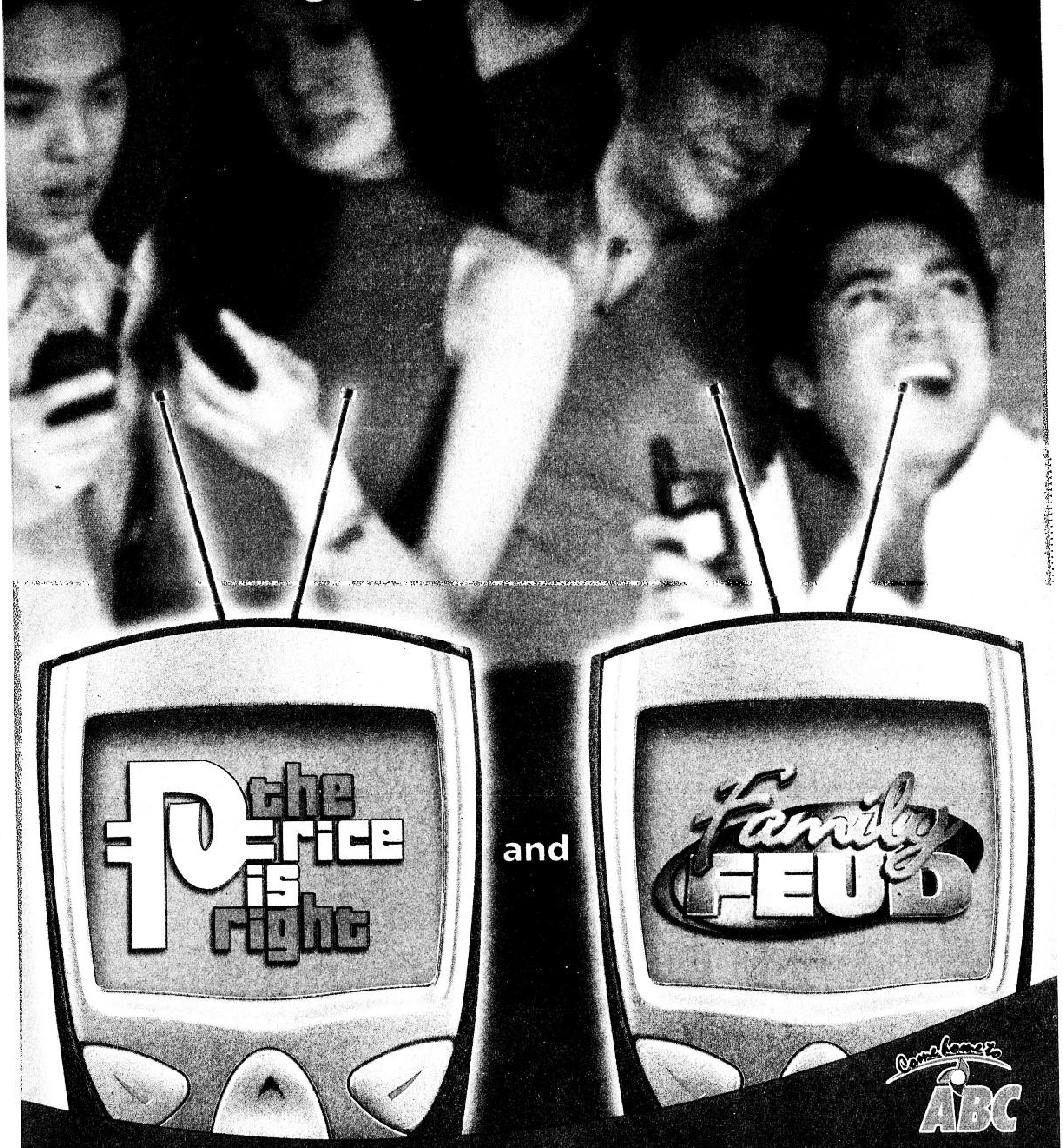

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Contractors liable for diggings

THE METRO Manila Development Authority will hold liable all construction and utility firms and their contractors for abandoned street diggings which cause traffic in major thoroughfares. MMDA Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said yesterday motorists and residents have been complaining due to the inconvenience brought by numerous abandoned and street diggings by utility firms.

Alcuin Papa

METRO
Editor Louie C. Camino

Stop deal, GMA told, or lose P390B /A22
Picars to be charged in Strawberry slay /A22

WPD in disarray

By Philip Tubeza and Agnes Donato

EMBATTLED Manila police head Chief Supt. Nicolas Pasinos Jr. said he is prepared to leave his post after a series of scandals hit the Western Police District in the past few weeks.

The WPD chief yesterday also relieved the entire 28-man Sta. Monica, Ermita police community precinct after a Saudi Arabian complained that some of them tried to extort $1,500 from him a few weeks ago.

"I am ready to be relieved; I have no Torrens title over my post," Pasinos told the INQUIRER in an interview Tuesday night.

One of the issues dogging the WPD chief is the transfer of 400 Manila policemen to units outside the National Capital Region.

Officials of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association Inc. yesterday called on Pasinos and National Capital Region Police Office Director Edgardo Aglipay to "stop their posturing" and urged them to immediately implement the National Police Commission memo reinstating the transferred policemen to their mother units.

"Reforming the ranks is OK, but it should not come at the expense of lowly policemen," said SPO1 Virgo Villareal, MBFAI spokesperson.

He said the Napolcom has already ruled that the transfers were "arbitrary," and yet the reassigned policemen have not been restored to their mother units.

"Does this mean that policemen do not have a right to due process?" Villareal asked.

But Metro Manila police chief Aglipay on Tuesday said he could no longer comply with Napolcom's two-week ultimatum stopping the transfer of policemen because the matter is no longer in his hands.

Aglipay explained that he transferred the Manila policemen to provincial units after about 500 lawmen from the provinces came to augment police units in Metro Manila.

Aglipay said he had to replace the warm bodies lost by the provincial units with policemen from Metro Manila.

"All that took place was an exchange," Aglipay said. "I have no authority to transfer policemen because I am only a regional director."

Aglipay said Napolcom's order is "not applicable anymore" because the NCRPO has already stopped the exchange of policemen in Metro Manila and other regions.

"All movements now will just be within Metro Manila," he said.

As for those who have already been reassigned to other regions, Aglipay said he can no longer restore them to their mother units because the exchange involved not only him, but also the commander of the receiving region.

Aglipay said the "exchange of less committed cops" was done after the policemen from other regions expressed reluctance to go back to their own units.

He also appealed for closure of the issue, saying it has already been resolved within the police organization.

"I have already explained this to Napolcom vice chair and executive commissioner Rogelio Pureza," Aglipay said. "We have already agreed that no transfer took place."

"Obviously, the only ones interested in this issue are the scalawags," Aglipay said.

WPD/A22

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& ALL MITSUBISHI 1-HOUR PHOTO CENTERS NATIONWIDE

Towing firm sows terror

By Christian V. Esguerra

BURLY members of a dubious vehicle towing service firm have been sowing terror and preying on hapless motorists and residents in Pasay City for nearly a year now.

Around 50 businessmen yesterday filed a complaint against the Magallanes-Makati Towing and Wrecking Service for harassing and extorting money from motorists whose vehicles are legally parked on Edsa in Malibay.

The complaint was filed with the office of Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad.

Composed of three team leaders and seven "hoodlum-looking" members, the private towing firm allegedly beats up drivers and car owners who refuse to yield their vehicles or pay the supposed towing fee, according to a businesswoman who declined to be identified.

As a result, the businessmen said customers have been avoiding the Malibay area where there are several hardware and construction supply establishments.

"The abuses and actions (of the towing firm) are making our businesses suffer," the traders claimed in their letter. "If (the firm) would continue to rampantly display their illegal ways, it could totally destroy our businesses."

From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, the towing firm allegedly combs the Edsa-Malibay area and indiscriminately hauls vehicles, including those parked legally.

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Jeepney drivers as traffic enforcers? Stupidity!

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

TO Benjamin Abalos, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority: You can resort to any gimmick you want to catch the attention of the public. But please don't push through with that stupid gimmick of having jeepney drivers enforce traffic rules.

Para mo naman kaming niloloko na niyan, Mr. Abalos! Please don't make a fool of us, the citizenry.

I know you're just trying to humor those street morons, but please, not at the expense of the citizenry!

***

Deputizing jeepney drivers as traffic enforcers will only add to the chaos in the streets of Metro Manila.

How can you expect law-breakers to arrest fellow law-breakers? Jeepney drivers, with very few exceptions, are the No. 1 violators of traffic rules.

Mr. Abalos, you will just be adding to the ranks of the stupid and abusive traffic enforcers if you deputize jeepney drivers. As of now, policemen and the "blue" and "yellow" traffic aides are the problem rather than the solution to the traffic mess in the metropolis.

***

By the way, Mr. Abalos, what happened to your grandiose scheme of ridding Edsa, the metropolis' main traffic artery, of colorum and smoke-belching buses?

You and Roberto Lastimoso, Land Transportation Office chief, were once bubbling with enthusiasm over the project. Despite the grand start, Edsa is still what it was before the campaign that was meant to unclog the main traffic artery.

Also, whatever happened to the plan to employ members of the Iglesia ni Cristo as traffic enforcers? I said earlier the plan might ease the traffic situation because INC members who would be deputized are the crème de la crème of the religious sect.

But employing jeepney drivers? You've got to be kidding, Mr. Abalos!

***

Ever since the Marines got back to Palawan, the residents of the province have felt safe. The local officials in the capital Puerto Princesa and the province are happy because the residents feel safe.

Only the New People's Army rebels are unhappy because they're no longer safe from the Marines. The NPAs were free to roam the hinterlands of the province and even the city's outskirts before the return of the Marines last month.

The Second Marine Battalion was pulled out of the Western Command based in Puerto Princesa City during the Moro pacification campaign in Central Mindanao two years ago.

***

The NPAs took advantage of the absence of the Armed Forces "fightingest soldiers" by building up their strength.

At the same time, the rebels collected "revolutionary taxes" from rich farmers in far-flung areas. They also collected protection money from some foreign contractors who are building a highway that will traverse the province.

The NPAs can no longer go about their shenanigans because they are constantly being pursued by the Marines. Over the weekend, I saw truckloads of these soldiers in full battle gear going to, I was told, areas where small bands of NPA guerrillas were sighted.

***

A Palawan resident, who asked for anonymity, expressed the general sentiment when he told me: "Please send our heartfelt thanks to Gen. (Diomedio) Villanueva (Armed Forces chief of staff) for bringing us back the Marines."

Some questions this writer would like answered in a most dispassionate way: Why do most of the citizens place so much trust in the Marines? What's wrong with Army soldiers? Aren't Army troops as efficient as the Marines? In areas where they are assigned, why are the Marines so loved by the barrio folk that many of them cry when they're pulled out from those places? Why are the Marines, despite their small number (They are only 8,000 Marines compared to the Army's 80,000 or more), able to accomplish their missions easily and with dispatch?

I don't mean to disparage the Army but those questions are not mine, they come from citizens who have had some dealings with the Marines one way or the other.

***

Going back to Palawan, planes going to and from Puerto Princesa are only half full. Before, they were filled with local and foreign tourists. Some shipping companies have cancelled Puerto Princesa as their port of call because there are very few passengers.

Hotels and restaurants in the city are also suffering from lack of guests. Palawan Garden, one of the biggest and classiest restaurants in the city, closed down recently.

But things are looking up. Dos Palmas, which closed down after the raid by the Abu Sayyaf last year, will reopen on Saturday, March 2. Little by little and ever so slowly, tourists are coming back, said a hotel employee.

***

And the city is again alive because it is awash with reports that a recall election might be held in July or after.

Most barangay officials in Puerto Princesa are reportedly planning to petition the Commission on Elections to hold a special election for mayor in the city. They are allegedly disenchanted with the performance of Mayor Dennis Socrates, who got elected due to the popularity of his late father, Gov. Salvador Socrates.

Defeated mayoral candidate Vicente "Sandy" Sandoval is reportedly behind the recall petition.

***

But irony of ironies, the guy who will benefit from Sandoval's recall petition is former Mayor Edward Hagedorn. That is, if the Comelec grants the recall petition and holds a special election later this year. Hagedorn will win the recall election hands down.

Hagedorn, who could not run for mayor in the last election as he had consumed three consecutive terms, was trounced by Joel Reyes for governor. Reyes was vice governor to Socrates but took over as provincial chief after Socrates died in a plane crash.

It wouldn't be easy for Hagedorn, though, to get into the expected fray. Some legal minds say he can't run because he is still covered by the ban on elective officials running for the same post after their third term. But other legal minds say Hagedorn can run because the ban doesn't cover a special or recall election.

Picars to be charged in Strawberry slay

By TJ Burgonio

CITING treachery, police vowed yesterday to file murder charges against the Picar family for the fatal shooting of former child actress Strawberry inside a middle-class subdivision in Las Piñas last December.

To be charged before the prosecutor's office in Las Piñas on Friday are Reynaldo Picar, his wife Corazon, their children Mark Ryan, Ronald and Glenn and a family friend, Lulette Rogers.

The six will also be charged with two accounts of attempted murder for attacking Strawberry's boyfriend, Jun Mark Doromal, and his chief escort, Marfie Arabani, police officials said.

The officials made the announcement upon emerging from a four-hour case conference at the national headquarters in Camp Crame presided by Director General Leandro Mendoza.

Director Nestorio Gualberto, head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said the bullet that killed Strawberry (Anouk Baldo in real life) came from the Picar group, citing testimonial and physical evidence.

"There was conspiracy and treachery in the killing of Strawberry. They were all there during the commission of the crime," he told reporters, but declined to say who among the Picars fired the fatal shot.

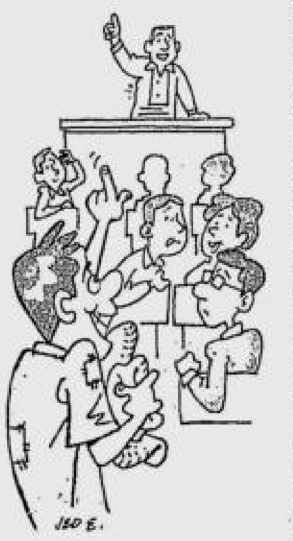
Police have in their custody six witnesses, including two security guards.

Investigators, however, cleared Doromal and some security guards of any involvement in the killing.

"It is not possible for Doromal or any other person to have fired at the victim's car," Gualberto said, citing the investigator's findings that Strawberry's car was shot from behind while moving away from the Picars.

Happy ending for QC squatters

By Agnes E. Donato



SOME 50 families in Quezon City will no longer have to squat on land they did not own after they collectively bought the four lots where they now live during an auction of delinquent real properties at the Quezon City Hall yesterday.

Jose Recado Larano, 42, and his neighbors in Barangay Sta. Monica, Novaliches, went to the auction sale with a feeling of dread that wealthy bidders would buy the lots where they have been living on since 1962.

The former squatters carried placards to the auction declaring they are residents of the lots owned by Aurora Franco, Elena Sabile Medva, Severino Cortez, and Domingo Franco Paglinawan.

The properties were the last four items on the auction list.

City Treasurer Victor Endriga thought the group came to protest the bidding. But he was himself surprised when the group applauded after one of the auction board members announced that the Aurora Franco lot was the next property to be put on sale.

A representative of the squatters stood up and placed a bid of P19,100 for the 400-square-meter property.

The other participants in the auction decided not to bid for the property, sensing that to do so would mean depriving the squatters of their homes.

"Even if I win in the bidding, I doubt if I can drive those people away and utilize the property," one of the bidders said. "I'll wind up having a headache."

The auction ended with the squatters buying all four lots, with a total area of 3,900 square meters, for P140,000.

WPD in disarray

(From page A21)

The MBFAI is composed of Western Police District policemen with the rank of SPO4 and below.

They are protesting Aglipay's alleged "harsh" measures to instill discipline among WPD rank-and-file.

MBFAI spokesperson Villareal said if policemen come in late during roll call or are caught with the wrong uniform, they should be suspended without pay.

But they should not be "punished harshly" by shipping them out to the provinces, he added.

On Feb. 22, some MFBAI members said prayers and held a candle-lighting ceremony to protest the "harsh" measures.

Pasinos has since ordered an investigation of the "praying incident."

But Villareal said the policemen did not do anything wrong when they prayed, adding that more than 2,000 policemen would be affected if the WPD leadership pushes through with its plan to sanction those who participated in the praying incident.

Yesterday, the Manila police chief relieved the entire Sta. Monica precinct, including its chief Senior Insp. Linsley Pillejera, and the head of the Luneta detachment, Chief Insp. Melvin Mongcal.

The revamp came after Saudi Arabian Abdulrahman H. Alhumedhin, 37, accused its members PO1 Oliver Aluning, 27, PO1 Roger Romualdo, 27, PO1 Eduardo Robles, 32, and PO1 Edwin Jurilla, of trying to extort money from him on Feb. 17.

Jurilla belongs to the Ermita police station, while the three others were originally assigned in Region II. The WPD has filed robbery-extortion charges against the four policemen, including their civilian accomplice Danilo B. Guidoc, 30, a security guard.

Moncal was sacked after a 23-year-old Cainta resident accused three of his men of trying to rape her (see related story on page A22).

"They were relieved because of their command responsibility," Pasinos said. "But of course, we will correct that situation if the investigation later shows that their men are innocent."

Stop deal, GMA told, or lose ₱390 billion

By Alcuin Papa

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo must stop the implementation of the garbage contract between the government and Jancom Environment Corp. as this would defraud the government of P390 billion, non-government organizations demanded yesterday.

The groups, led by Koalisyon Linis Basura and the Citizen's National Network Against Poverty and Corruption (CNN-APC), in an open letter to Arroyo and the Supreme Court, said the contract must be rescinded.

The Supreme Court's third division upheld the validity of the contract on Jan. 30, 2002.

Other groups that sent the letter include Bantay Kalikasan, Mother Earth, Couples of Christ, Umalun Inc., Valupa, Lakan Inc., Baupco Inc., Kasamoto Inc., Pamana Inc., Kumalappa Inc., Kalasag Inc. and www.pldt.com.

The groups called the contact "detective and grossly disadvantageous to the government and the Filipino people" and the high court's decision "flawed."

In their letter, the groups "strongly urged the President not to sign the Jancom contract and instead impose the necessary sanctions on involved officials and agencies that approved a fraudulent and defective contract."

They also asked the Supreme Court "to review en banc and reverse the blatantly erroneous decision of the Third Division."

The groups said the contract "violated the ban on incinerators as provided by two laws—the Clean Air Act of 1999 (RA 8749) and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001 (RA 9003)."

They claimed the contract also deviated from the original bid proposal. The groups explained that the original bid stipulated a tipping fee of $10 per ton. However, the signed contract pegged the tipping fee at $59 per ton.

"Compounded by various incremental costs, tipping fee will increase to $119 per ton. According to the 1995 World Bank estimates, costs should only be $10-20 per ton," the NGOs said.

"Other than the fatal impact of incineration, the most glaring fraud of the contract is the $119 tipping fee. The overprice alone would balloon to a staggering P337 billion to P390 billion over 25 years! That's P390 billion ending up in the pockets of corrupt government officials instead of being used to build 535,714 new classrooms, 1.6 million low-cost houses, 300,000 kilometers of barangay roads, or buy 316 million sacks of rice," the groups added.

The tipping fee is paid by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to Jancom for the garbage that they collect and process.

Also, the groups said the original project cost was increased by 142 percent, from

$156 million to $377.5 million.

Because Jancom's incineration technology has been declared as a violation of the Clean Air Act, the groups said it was already rejected by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on March 16, 2001.

Another reason for the junking of the contract, the groups said, was that it was "already rejected thrice by the Investment Coordinating Council of the National Economic and Development Authority under three presidents, most recently on Nov. 21, 2001."

Mayor craves for garbage

THE MAYOR of Rodriguez, Rizal is now begging Metro Manila mayors to dump their garbage in the newly constructed Rodriguez Sanitary Landfill.

Mayor Pedro Cuerpo said that, before the opening of the dump in Rodriguez (formerly Montalban), Metro Manila mayors were pleading with him to open the landfill. The situation now is the exact opposite, Cuerpo said.

"It is I who is now practically begging them to dump their waste at the RSL," he said.

If fully utilized, the RSL is expected to bring P4 billion to the town coffers in three years, more than enough to develop Rodriguez into a bustling municipality of Rizal province.

Nelson Flores

JESS YUSON

POETIC NAP

Who can't help envy this worker who, shunning all mundane cares, takes a sweet, poetic nap under the swaying coconut fronds by the Manila Bay?

New version of Luneta rape

By Philip Tubeza

SO who's telling the truth?

Four young female sex workers yesterday came forward and denied that the charges of a 23-year-old woman from Cainta, Rizal who alleged that three Rizal Park policemen tried to rape her Monday night.

They even accused the victim of being a prostituted woman working in Luneta, like them.

The women, aged 20 to 22, yesterday went to the Manila City Prosecutors Office with Ermita police station chief Supt. Manolo Martinez and submitted their affidavit before Chief Inquest prosecutor Nelson Salva.

Martinez said he is confident that the charges against his men would later be dropped because of the four women's account and due to the "lack of evidence" against them.

Luneta policemen P03 Roberto M. Bombita, SP01 Reynaldo S. Ferrer, and SP02 Danilo L. Factor, were earlier charged with acts of lasciviousness and arbitrary detention.

Martinez said that the inquest prosecutor on Tuesday night ordered the temporary release of three policemen and ordered a more detailed investigation of the case.

In their sworn affidavit, two of the prostitutes said they were among the nine women and one man arrested Monday night in Rizal Park for vagrancy around 1 a.m.

They said that they were released around 2 a.m., together with the complainant.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, the four prostitutes, who admitted that they were Bombita's friends, insisted that the complainant was not taken out of the cell and abused.

"She was with us all the time. We were released together," one of the women said.

But the complainant said that she was taken out of the detention cell and abused only after all the other detainees were released when they paid P100.

She said she remained because she had no money to pay. The complainant, who said she was arrested around 11:30 p.m. Monday, added that she was released around 5 a.m. the following day.

METROBRIEFS

40 years for snatcher

A PASAY City court yesterday sentenced to a 40-year prison term convicted cell phone snatcher Joey Dimaano, 28, who killed lawyer Oscar Nudo last year. Dimaano was also ordered to pay the family of the victim almost P6 million in damages. Court records showed Nudo was driving his owner-type jeep near the corner of Arnaiz and Dela Cruz Streets when Dimaano, who was riding a bicycle, snatched his cell phone. Nudo chased him and was able to get back his cell phone, but Dimaano stabbed the lawyer several times in the body.

Christian V. Esguerra

Ma, daughter killed

MEYCAUAYAN, Bulacan—Widow Liza Tan Ngo, 65, and her daughter Susan, 35, were stabbed dead in their house in Barangay Sto. Niño here on Tuesday night. A relative of the victims found their bodies on Wednesday afternoon after Susan, a teacher at a Chinese school in Binondo, Manila did not show up for her classes, said Supt. Jake de Leon, Bulacan police chief. He said they are looking at robbery as one of the motives in the killing.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

PUP book launch

A COLLECTION of 27 short stories entitled Ang Pagdating Ni Elias Plaridel at Iba Pang Piling Mga Kuwento, each one a product of Ave Perez Jacob's incendiary pen, will be launched today at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Mabini Campus amphitheater in Sta. Mesa, Manila, starting 4 p.m.

The book-launching is sponsored by the Center for Human Development under the Office of the Vice President for Research & Development headed by Dr. Normita A. Villa.

Other co-sponsors are the College of Arts, Departamento Ng Filipinolohiya, and the Front for the Recognition of Enlightened Educators (FREE-PUP). PUP President Dr. Ofelia M. Carague will be the main speaker.

Lions Club mission

A MEDICAL-DENTAL mission to benefit residents of Barangay Vergara in Mandaluyong City will be undertaken by the Lions Club International, Obando Lions Club, District 301-01, Philippines on Sunday.

It will be the second medical mission for the place in less than a month, the first one being held on Feb. 10 under the auspices of Alige, a non-governmental organization, with support from volunteers and Astra Xeneca Asia Pacific president Ed Enriquez.

Reading glasses will also be distributed during the mission that starts at 9 a.m.

Natural brings back boy-band craze

By Leah Salterio

THEY are the newest kids on the music block. But instead of simply following in the footsteps of their predecessors like New Kids on the Block, N'Sync, Backstreet Boys, Take Five and O-Town, Natural dares to conquer newer heights in the music scene.

For one, the new five-man band has an edge because all the young members not just sing in five-part harmonies, but also dance, play musical instruments and write their own songs.

Early on in their career, Natural already had an ace with their mentor and discoverer, Lou Pearlman, the same guy responsible for the success of such groups as N'Sync and Backstreet Boys.

Pearlman took Natural under his wing and manages the group using the same boy band formula which propelled Backstreet Boys and N'Sync to dizzying heights.

"I abide by the saying that 'If it's not broken, don't fix it'," Pearlman explains. "There will be generation after generation of good-looking guys with the same musical talent. The musical trend will change as we go from pop to R&B to rock. But boy bands are mutating into something else. This is the kind of point where people are looking for the bands again."

Florida

Natural is composed of Ben Bledsoe, Josh Horn, Michael Johnson, Patrick King Jr. and Marc Terenzi, whose ages range from 19 to 23. They got together in the summer of 1999 in Orlando, Florida and started singing a capella songs for anyone who simply wanted to listen.

After an audition, they inked a contract with a local production company for which they started to record demos. The boys were simply relentless in their pursuit of a recording deal. At one point, they even made a trip to New York where they were made to perform 15 showcases in a single day.

But in the process, Natural has built a local following in Florida, so by the time they did their first live concert at the House of Blues in Orlando in January 2000, it was a sold-out gig.

"That was one of the most memorable experiences we had," Patrick shares.

Natural got a major break in mid-2000, when a German TV network did a feature on the boys and followed the group with cameras over a three-week period for a show, "24 Hours." The program became the number one show on its timeslot when it aired the episode with Natural.

Adoring fans

That particular TV stint brought the boys to Germany, where they were welcomed by adoring fans. During the visit, the group also performed at the prestigious Pop-Komm music festival and appeared on other German TV shows like "Chart Attack."

Upon their return to Orlando, Natural came to the attention of Pearlman, who lost no time in signing up the boys.

Except for Marc who is from Massachusetts and Ben who hails from California, the three other members are all natives of Florida.

"I used to do a lot of acting and musical theater when I was still in San Francisco and Los Angeles," Ben says. "I moved to Florida because I wanted to get more into music."

Marc moved down from Boston and through some mutual friends, met the other guys with whom he shares a passion for music.

"Some friends heard we wanted to do the same thing so we met each other and it was an instant click," says Ben. "We started looking for other people. Marc met Michael and Patrick at a party.

"We asked them to come try out and everything just went really well. I knew J through my vocal coach and when we all got together, everything fell into place."

Backgrounds

According to the boys' bio, the members come from different backgrounds and have different musical tastes.

"But when Natural came together, something incredible happened—a whole new sound in pop-rock music," notes Pearlman.

Ben traces his roots to Atlanta, although his heart has always been in Hollywood. He started singing professionally at the age of 11. At 12, he ventured into TV commercials and was also doing TV and film. He is a member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and still models for a number of brands. He plays electric bass, upright bass and the sax.

J displayed his musical talent at 5, when he started playing the piano, then the trumpet at 11. When his grandmother took notice of his musical inclination even before he could speak, she encouraged him to sing. However, J didn't pursue singing. He never sang alone nor even hummed a tune.

He did theater at age 14 and appeared in over 30 productions where he worked as actor or musical director. He is an accomplished pianist and classically trained vocalist. His resumé lists jobs at Disney and Universal Studios. But once J started singing, there was no stopping him.

Youngest

Michael, the youngest in the group, studied dance when he was only 4, which led him to become a professional dancer. He has danced on a number of Disney TV social and has won many titles and scholarships.

At 8, Michael studied voice and became involved in musical theater. His love for rhythm landed him the role of Natural's drummer and percussionist. His vocal prowess also lends depth to the group's over-all sound.

Patrick plays guitar, keyboards, violin, cello and French horn. He has competed in dance nationwide and has won awards and scholarships. He has performed on Disney's "Star Search," "The Maury Povich Show" and "The Bozo Show."

Marc knew even when he was still a young boy that he was born to perform. In his every endeavor, he was supported by his parents.

At 7, he learned to play the piano at his mom's church. But with no one to teach him, he taught himself to play by listening to songs. He learned to play the guitar the same way, after his father gave it to him as a gift one Christmas. That goes the same for the sax. It wasn't long before Marc also learned how to sing.

Lead singer

At 12, Marc acted in a Boston-based TV show. From there, he got a chance to travel the world as lead singer for a collegiate choir.

He moved to Florida with his best friend because he was optimistic that everything will work out there. Today, aside from Natural, Marc keeps busy with modeling and acting. He was recently featured as the singing voice of Nelson on the Fox TV show, "The Simpsons."

Last year, Natural got another big break when '60s icons The Monkees included them in a four-month concert tour.

"That gave us a chance to take our music to the next level and make it known even to the fans of The Monkees, who has an illustrious 35-year music career," Michael says.

NEW FAB FIVE. The boys sing in five-part harmonies, dance, play instruments and write their own songs.

Early this month, Natural embarked on a visit to Manila to promote their debut single, "Put Your Arms Around Me." Their gigs entailed a series of campus tours, mall shows, radio and TV guestings.

Upon their return to the US, Natural will work on their debut album to be released locally by BMG Records Pilipinas.

Billboard

The group will also tape a concert for Fox Family Channel and will prepare for a tour of the US and Southeast Asia.

"Put Your Arms Around Me" created a buzz in the American music market when Billboard raved it as a "startingly good pop song, tightly produced, beautifully written and quite a showcase for some utterly glorious harmonies."

The ditty was penned by Steve Kipner, who also wrote Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle" and 98 Degrees' "The Hardest Thing."

"Put Your Arms Around Me" has been certified gold in the US, with nearly a million copies sold. The song landed on the 8th spot of Billboard's Top 100 Singles Chart, which all the more compelled Natural members to prove themselves in the international music scene.

Action films about to make a comeback

VIEWFINDE

Nestor U. Torre

FOR many months now, most of our top action stars haven't been making movies. Since the industry is in a slump, most producers can't afford the extra money needed to pay for the special production values, big scenes and explosions required by action spectacles.

The action stars' huge talent fees are also a problem. In addition, some macho leads insist on line-producing their own starrers, thus adding another big item to the budget. Most discouraging of all are action stars who like to call the shots, ordering even their directors around.

To be fair, some action leads have taken due cognizance of the current hard times, and have reduced their talent fees. Sadly, there are still few takers for their services, even at those reduced rates.

Action movies are still being made on occasion, but they are generally of the budget variety, costing P5M or less and topbilling younger or less bankable leads.

Local action stars' woes at this time are quite ironic, because on the Hollywood film scene, action, adventure and war films have become more popular than ever. And, when those US blockbusters are shown here, they are avidly patronized by the very same Pinoys who scorn their local film counterparts.

There's more than just "colonial mentality" operating here. Quite a number of local action fans have finally gotten fed up with Filipino action films' trite, tired formula and cost-cutting shortcuts, hence their decision to favor the bigger, more exciting Hollywood products.

So, will local actioners continue to be passed up by our viewers? Perhaps not. If you survey developments on the Philippine movie scene, you'll notice that some big action stars are about to return to the silver screen in a big way.

First up is movie King **Fernando Poe Jr.**, whose first film in two years, "Batas ng Lansangan," opened last Feb. 27. If the movie is a hit, it can encourage other producers to bankroll other non-quickie and non-budget action productions.

Robin Padilla is also poised to show his first hard-action movie in a long time. And we hear that **Rudy Fernandez** and **Bong Revilla** similarly have new actioners lined up for production.

These are better-thought-out productions that could interest viewers in local action flicks all over again. That's what the producers of these movies hope will happen in the next couple of months.

However, if these new action gambits turn out to be more of the same old stuff, the word will quickly get around to that effect, and the action stars' collective comeback bid will come to naught. Result: the macho leads will have to content themselves with working on TV or playing non-action role sin the movies.

But, even if that happens, the situation may not be all that bleak, at least when viewed in the long term. Some industry observers surmise that, if the action superstars' new starrers are rejected by viewers, this will force the stars, producers, scriptwriters and directors to finally craft a new kind of action film that will excite today's viewers.

Some big stars may have to fall by the wayside, but the long-range effect could be the revitalization of the local action scene.

Of course, we hope that the new films led by FPJ's production will find favor with viewers. First things first!

TV treats

TODAY, Feb. 28 on the National Geographic Channel: At 9:30 p.m. on "Tomorrow's World," see how the British Army has turned to digital technology (from relying on maps and compasses) to pinpoint enemy targets.

On Star Movies: At 9 p.m., "Gone in 60 Seconds" stars **Nicolas Cage** as a car thief. Costars include **Angelina Jolie** and **Robert Duvall**.

The perfect anaesthesia for an achy-breaky heart

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

SOMETIME in July last year I came out with my two English translations of Larusso's smash hit "On Ne S'aimera Plus Jamais" ("We Will Never Love Each Other Again). One was literal and the other was based on the beats of the French version so that it may be sung with the same tune.

I thought of practicing my French by translating Larusso's song because I found it rather funny that every band in town was mouthing the lyrics and yet they were clueless as to what the song means.

I was swamped with e-mail after that column came out, which only goes to show how popular Larusso's song is.

Most of those who wrote were surprised to find out that the upbeat song is actually a goodbye song. The happy tune serves to cover up the sad message.

Larusso's song is the perfect anaesthesia for an achy-breaky heart. No one who has ever really loved can deny being stuck in denial after a split-up.

Since the French Diva is now in town for a promo tour of her new album, I thought it would be timely to reprint one of my translations so that Larusso's fans like *moi* can sing their hearts out and sing the sting of a broken heart away.

Instead of just humming along as if you're trapped in an alien Karaoke Bar. Vive Larusso!

On Ne S'aimera Plus Jamais

(Note: This is not a literal translation but the message of the original French song is kept intact. I just syllabicated it in such a way that it will follow the French version's beat so it can be sung as well)

"We don't love each other anymore
No ifs and buts
It's the end of our keeping score
Now have the guts
To say you are not worth fighting for
Just let me walk out through the door
I don't love you the same way anymore
I'm so sorry
But I'm no longer happy
Set me free
No use to keep on blaming me
Just kiss me and let me be
Refrain:
I don't love you the same way anymore
I'm not yours
There are no more words left to say
We lost our way
No reason for us to stay
This is it
The love we had has reached its final day
We used to say come what may

We have stopped believing in us
Love's gone to trash
We can not run for cover
It's over! It's over!
Time for a new him and a new her
Love can only get better and sweeter
I will cherish your smile
Not just for awhile
I will cherish your smile
And I will go and sigh
We don't love each other anymore
We don't love each other anymore
It's over, it's over
It's over, over, over
Move over"

Personal

LUD, thanks for turning my world upside down and changing it for the better!

For feedback, e-mail friends_at_dsquare@yahoo.com or wateringhole2000@yahoo.com

---

Crowe-Cruise pie made of chunks of old films

From page A26

ment? What happens to the soul when the body is frozen?

Near-walkout

After "Almost Famous," I resolved to see all the movies that director Cameron Crowe would ever make. Since "Almost Famous" was almost titled "Vanilla Sky," there was twice as much incentive to see this latest one. Make that thrice as much, because of Tom Cruise, Cameron Diaz, and Penelope Cruz together, plus Jason Lee (the band's lead singer in "Almost"), and Kurt Russell (stepdad of the female lead in "Almost").

What happened was, I *almost* walked out on the movie, suspecting that I had seen huge chunks of it in "The Game" (starring Sean Penn and Michael Douglas), "Memento" (starring Guy Pearce) ... the list is long.

I stayed for new insights, only to be made certain that I had indeed seen huge chunks of it in "Forever Young" (starring Mel Gibson), "Total Recall" (starring Arnold Schwarzenegger), "Ice Man" (starring John Lone), or was that "Encino Man" (starring Brendan Fraser)? Kidding.

"Vanilla's" David Aames turns to cryogenics following a horribly disfiguring car crash. The firm that he employs for the purpose has a new product that allows the client to have 3-D dreams while in the frozen state. The client is not merely an actor in these dreams; he determines the directions of the dreams according to previous experiences and emotions—the more deeply etched, the more powerful their effect.

Conflicting emotions

I wish not to spoil it for indulgent, patient, and adventurous Crowe-Cruise fans, so I will reveal no more details of the plot. I myself took 14 hours to decide that the time, money and effort I spent on the movie were not for naught. I stewed gradually but well.

"Vanilla Sky" is bound to affect different people in different ways, at different speeds and levels.

The latex mask alone that Aames wears half of the time has elicited conflicting reactions. It courted cruel potshots from critics who earlier professed as much faith in Crowe as I did.

But that mask lifts many moments in the movie from pandemonium, or mere ambiguity, to profundity. For instance, one scene in the dance hall where Aames, wearing the mask front-side back, makes a nuisance of himself. Another shows Aames again in the mask, looking out the window while a giant balloon with a laughing face floats by. The two instances both end in a poetic pause.

I hear that, compared to "Abre los Ojos," the 1997 Spanish movie on which this one is based, many things seem wrong with "Vanilla Sky." Until I get to see the original, I can live with the things that seem right about the remake.

Crowe has painted his landscapes and photographed his characters with equal parts of urgency and thoughtfulness, in fact, with affection. In hindsight, I am convinced that the pace of the opening and establishing sequences was deliberate, so that when things snowball, it is unbearable.

Memorable lines

Toward the end, though, the material gets a little unwieldy. Like, suddenly Aames has acrophobia, and even more suddenly, the moviegoers are invited to have a say on how his torment should end.

On the "lighter" side: Cameron Diaz is made to deliver some really dreadful lines, including how she "swallowed" something she merely used as hairdressing in her landmark movie, "Something About Mary."

Most other memorable lines are okay. Describing the woman that Aames is trying to shake off, his new conquest sighs, "The saddest girl to ever hold a martini." Explaining his post-smashup paranoia, Aames says, "Once you've gone over a bridge at 80 mph, you don't invite happiness in without a full body search."

There's one singular turn that broke all the tension for me in the concluding rooftop tableau: Thawed and hyper after 150 years, Aames is led to a final round of self-exorcisms by his "tech support," the very likeness of Ernie Baron. I am at last convinced *Ka* Ernie is super-human.

I don't mind seeing "Vanilla Sky" again, just to help me tie up some loose ends. Also to hear Aames' post-cryogenic pick-up line: "I'm frozen, you're dead, and I love you."

I am not about to explain this.

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2 HINOG SA PILIT
3 GOT 2 BELIEVE

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3 GOT 2 BELIEVE
4 COLLATERAL DAMAGE

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'Nura at Velma' goes to Island Cove

SHOWS

"SI Nura, Si Velma," one of the longest-running comedy sketches to date, goes to the Island Cove Resort for a special show, "Cove Jam: Si Nura, Si Velma," featuring the two stand-up comedians who made the show popular, Allan K and Leonard Obal.

Set at Island Cove Resort's Purple Ostrich Disco at 9 tonight, "Cove Jam" will feature Allan K as Nura and Leonard Obal as Velma in updated comedy sketches based on the latest happenings in the lives of the Superstar and the Star for All Seasons.

Special guests in "Cove Jam" are Yam Ledesma, the Sex Bomb Dancers and "The Confused" (Joyce Yadao, Martin Mijares and Arnell Tamayo).

For details and ticket reservations, call Elma at 0917-989-9935.

Gospel concert

PRAISE music is alive and well in Manila!

A more inspired and enlightened Manila audience is expected when acclaimed praise and worship leader Steve Kuban performs at the PSC (formerly Ultra, Pasig City) on March 16.

The concert, "Jump for Jesus," marks Kuban's second Manila stopover. His first local performance in 1998 was held at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Kuban's Manila show again expects another stream of praise music devotees, whose number has increased largely due to the clamor for an alternative source of hope in these trying times.

Through the sheer power of music, Kuban has enlightened thousands of people all over the world, from his homeland in Canada to the glitzy Las Vegas region, down to the far-flung areas of the Orient such as India (November 2001), Japan (January 2002) and South America (February 2002).

Kuban's albums include "The Lord is My Tower," "Jump (for Jesus)," "More of the River" and "Come Holy Spirit."

Mounted by Wilbros Productions, "Jump for Jesus" will also feature local guest performers.

For tickets and reservations, call 372-6038 to 39.

GOSPEL singer and worship leader Steve Kuban.

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CINEMA 1
SHALLOW HAL
12:10 / 2:35 / 5:00 / 7:25 / 9:50
P 13

CINEMA 2
THIRTEEN GHOST
12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 10:00
R 18

Matinee: P80.00 - Screenings before 5:00pm, Monday thru Friday (Free Seating).
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CINEMA
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RAT RACE - GP 12:10, 2:35, 5:00, 7:25, 9:50	13 GHOST - R 18 11:00, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	SHALLOW HAL - P 13 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
MOTHMAN PROPHECIES - P 13 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40	GOT 2 BELIEVE 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45	COLLATERAL DAMAGE - R 18 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

Matinee, P80, Mon.-Fri., 11:00 am to 4:45 pm Screenings, Free Seating.

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1 THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES	1 THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES	4 VANILLA SKY	1 BRIDE W/ WHITE HAIR (Exclusive Screening)	1 SHALLOW HAL THX
2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE	2 RAT RACE	5 KATE &LEOPOLD	2 SHALLOW HAL	2 THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES
3 SHALLOW HAL	3 SHALLOW HAL THX GUARANTEED SEATS	6 COLLATERAL DAMAGE	3 NOWHERE TO HIDE (Phil. Premiere)	3 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
4 IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON		7 IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON	4 Onstage ILLUSIONE FEB. 22, 23 & MARCH 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16	4 KATE &LEOPOLD
				5 RAT RACE

The Ayala Malls Events
THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

MAKATI
WEEK OF FEB. 28 TO MARCH 6
ISUZU CAR EXHIBIT
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BPI 27th APPLIANCE MADNESS:
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An appliance madness.
Glorietta Activity Center, Ayala Mall
Lower Level, Edsa Mall, Makati Mall
March 6 to 24, 2002

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ALABANG TOWN CENTER EVENTS
February 23
LI'L HANDS CLUB
4th ANNIVERSARY EVENT
Activity Center
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Registration starts at 10:00 am

CEBU
EVENTS FOR AYALA CENTER CEBU:
February 25 to March 2, 2002 University of San Carlos Architecture Society presents PORTFOLIO 2002, a showcasing of student's works in Advertising, Painting, Interior Design and Architecture.-EXHIBIT AREA 1.
March 2, 2002- CHEMBLITZ- Inter-school Chemistry Quiz Bowl. An annual event organized by the University of San Carlos-ACTIVITY CENTER 1 PM TO 4 PM.
March 8 to 10, 2002: MURRAY RAINE- Witness a high energy performance of Globe and Rod Puppeteers in Spectacular Costumes. Dazzling puppet characters and award winning caricatures of Tina Turner, Pavarotti, Madonna, Tom Jones, Cher and Royal Family to name just a few. This international event will appeal to the family audience. - ACTIVITY CENTER
Show Schedule is as follows:
March 8, 2002 - 5:30 PM, 6:30 PM, 7:30 PM
March 9, 2002 - 3:30 PM, 5:30 PM, 6:30 PM
March 10 - 11 AM, 4 PM, 6 PM

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101	
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	GOT 2 BELIEVE . . .
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	ALI
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	13 GHOST
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	COLLATERAL DAMAGE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	MOTHMAN PROPHECIES
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7(DOLBY)	IKAW LAMANG . . .
FARMERS PLAZA-1(DOLBY)	HINOG SA PILIT
FARMERS PLAZA-2(DOLBY)	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
FIESTA CARNIVAL	
NEW FRONTIER	
MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	TATARIN / BOLD AFFAIR
ODEON	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
ODEON-2	13 GHOST
ROBEN	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
TANDEM-1	SEX MEDUSA
TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
TIMES	THE ONE / CAPT. CORELLI'S MANDOLIN
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
CORONET-2	ORIGINAL SIN
QUEZON-1	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
REMAR	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
REMAR-2	HINOG SA PILIT
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	GOT 2 BELIEVE IN MAGIC
B	BATAS NG LANSANGAN
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	RAT RACE
CINEMA-2	13 GHOST
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	REBULOSYONARYO
CINEMA-2	HALIK SA AKING LUPA
CINEMA-3	MARSHALL DICK
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	COLLATERAL DAMAGE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	FROM HELL
CINEMA-6	KATE & LEOPOLD
CINEMA-7	IKAW LANG HANGGANG NGAYON
CINEMA-8	KUNG IKAW AY ISANG PANAGINIP
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	COLLATERAL DAMAGE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	COLLATERAL DAMAGE
CINEMA-11(SDDS)	RIDING CARS w/ BOYS
CINEMA-12	VANILLA SKY
CINEMA-14	IKAW LANG HANGGANG NGAYON
CINEMA-15	IKAW LANG HANGGANG NGAYON
LORES	
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-3	CLOSED
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
CINEMA-1	RAT RACE
CINEMA-2	13 GHOST
CINEMA-3	SHALLOW HAL
CINEMA-4	MOTHMAN PROPHECIES
CINEMA-5	GOT 2 BELIEVE
CINEMA-6	COLLATERAL DAMAGE
UNIWIDE METROMALL	
(LAS PIÑAS)	
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	
CINEMA-4	
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	
CINEMA-1	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
CINEMA-2	THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE
[illegible]	ALAMID

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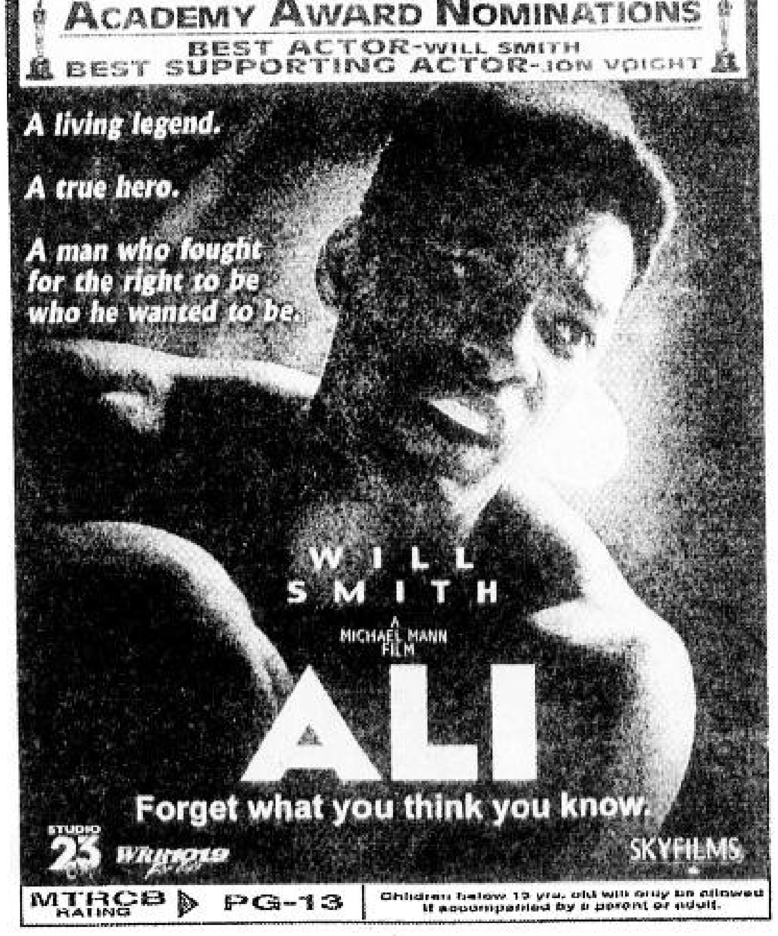

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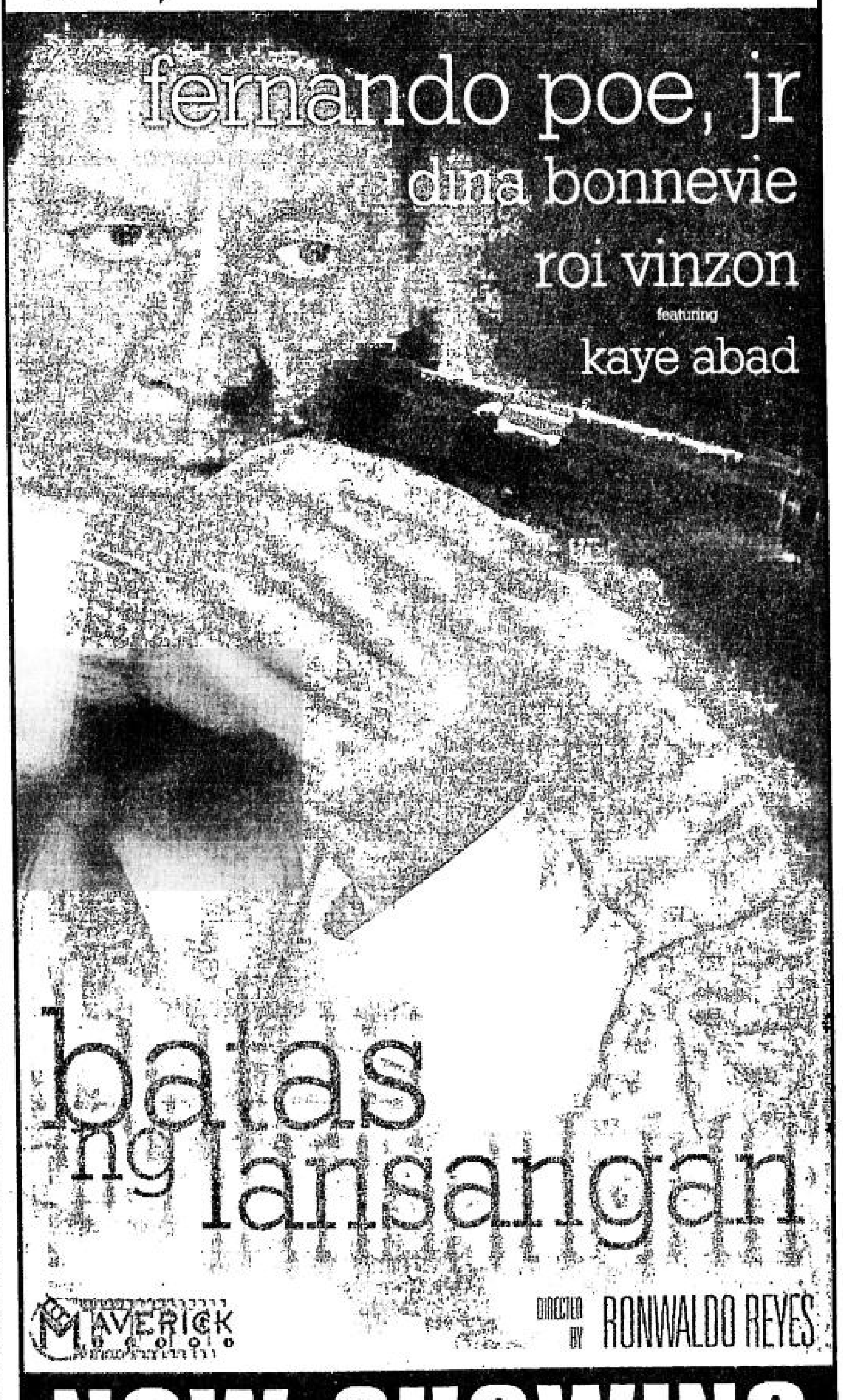

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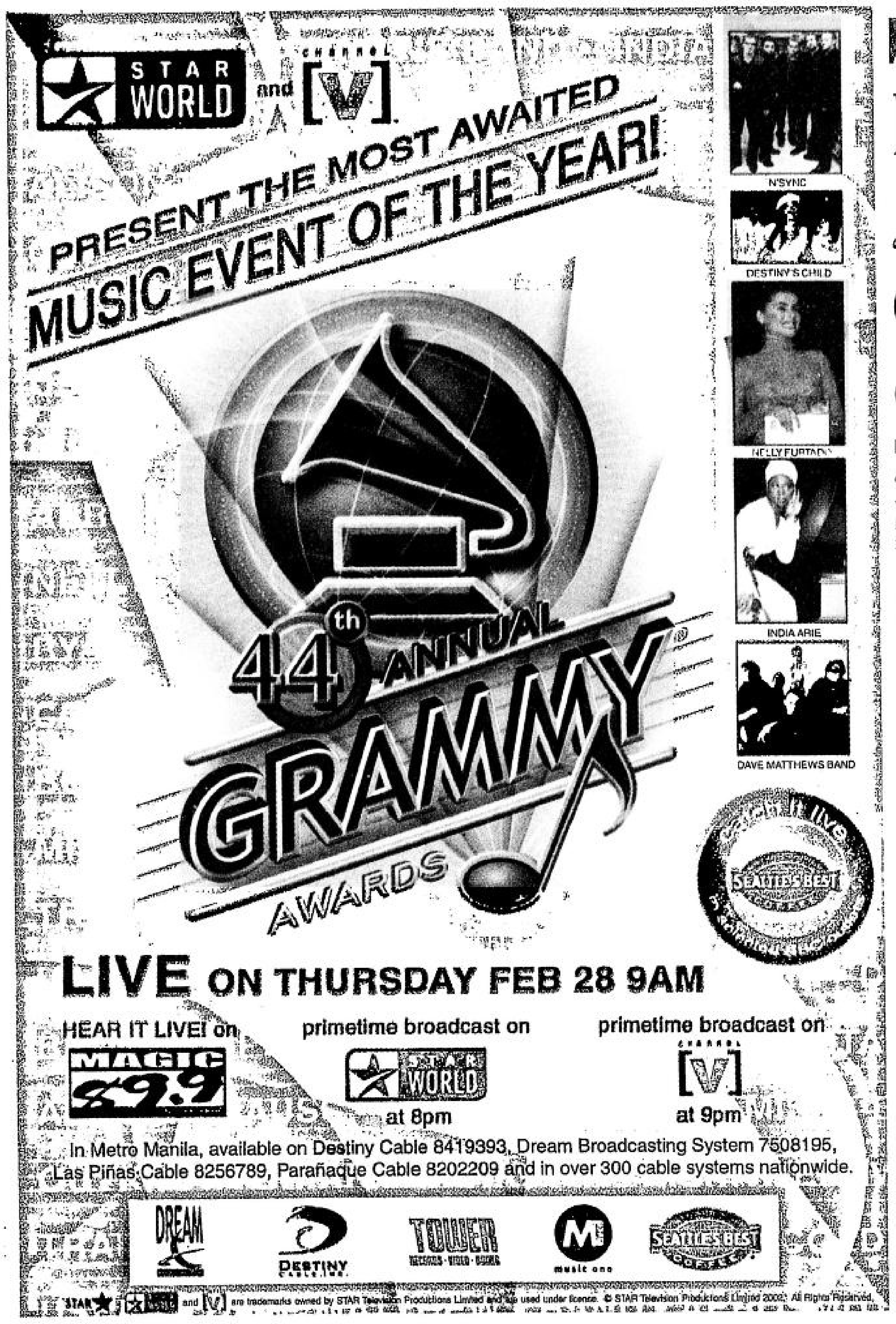
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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

'VANILLA SKY'

Crowe-Cruise pie made of chunks of old films

By Emmie G. Velarde

REVIEW

"WHAAAT'S haaappeninggg?" David Aames wails as he shoves the pillow harder into the face of some girl he went to bed with and is now doing away with.

"Arrrgh!"

This last outburst is mine. I asked the same question 15 minutes ago, more than an hour into the movie. That's about the time it became apparent that the tortuous crawler of a tale was all told: Rich playboy-publisher Aames (Tom Cruise) messes with one woman too many, and is being made to suffer dire consequences. Next, revelations and explanations started stumbling onto one another at migraine-inducing speed.

Right about now, the movie's puzzling snail start beckons like a memory that is precious but forever lost, unless I stay for a second viewing.

"Vanilla Sky" would be unforgettable, had it not been preceded by similar forays into the provocative questions it lays on the table. What is happiness? How dependent is it on the physical senses? Obviously it is alterable by shifting perceptions of reality; does this destroy its essence?

When these questions are answered, if they are answered, there are bound to surface some more. Who wants to live forever? If life is a game, can we isolate certain portions of it so we can make side bets? When the game fails to turn in our favor, can we take a vacation until we're ready to live with the results, or until the results conform to our designs?

And again some more: How do we position cryogenics vis a vis cloning, artificial insemination, euthanasia and, yes, karmic settle-

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Feb. 28, 2002 Schedule (FREE OF CHARGE)
3:00 PM (DARK DAZE) 11 shorts including Solo Cadenza, The Uninvited Guest, Rew <<, Motorsiklo, RGB, The Last Typewriter & Tutok.
6:00 PM (DRAMATIC SHORTS) 8 shorts including The Moment, Rescue in F Minor, 8 Ball, Love you to Death, Colori & Templementary.
8:00 PM (QUEEER DEAL, SEXUAL TENSIONS & ODDITIES) 11 shorts including Operation YY, Palugid, Walang Bahid Kasalanan, Malakas/ Maganda, Inverted Minstrel, Memories of Zero C & Narcissus

2:00 PM at the NCCA. Siglo Filipino: Odyssey of a nation by Butch Nolasco

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Ayala Center, Makati City

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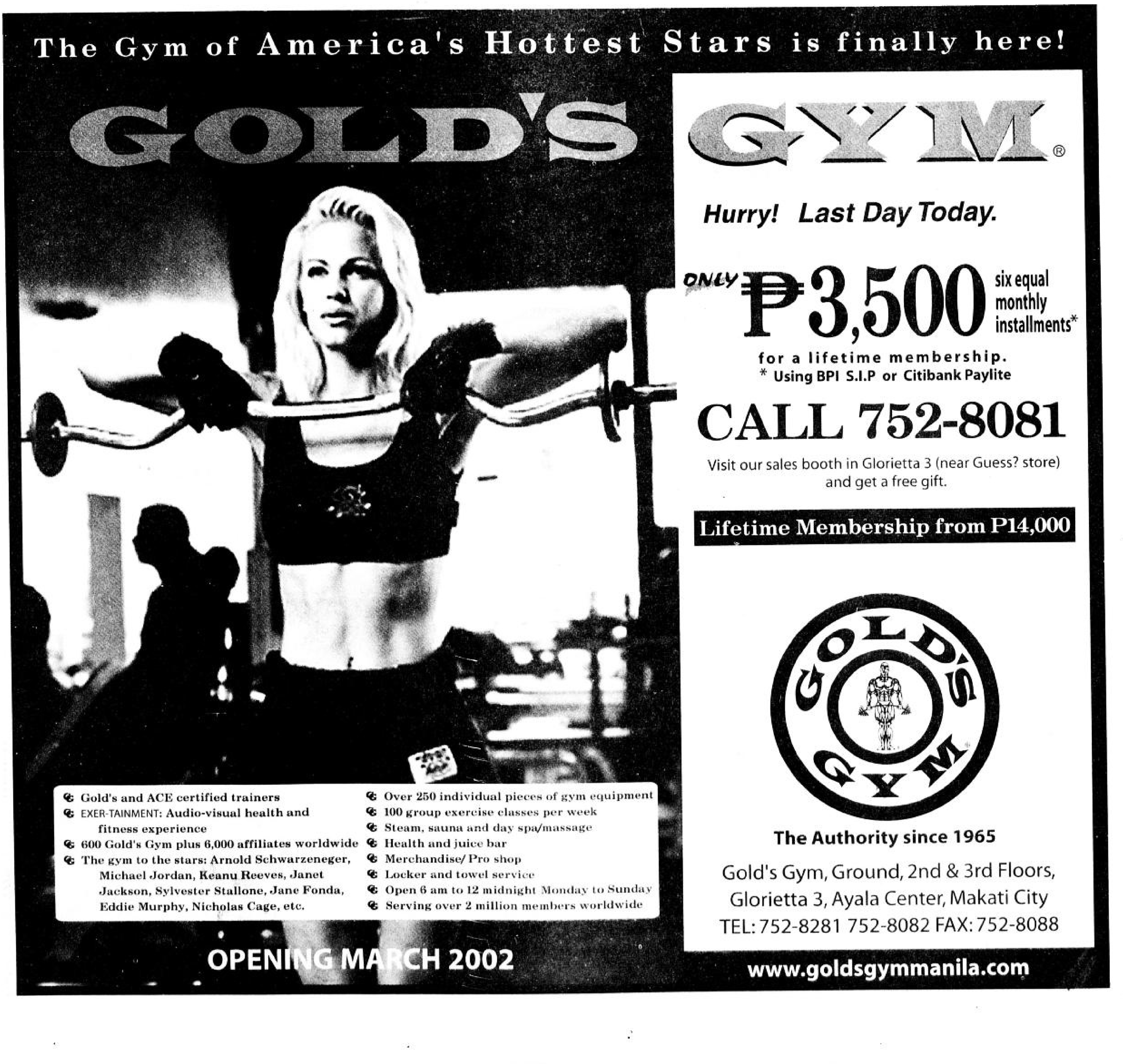
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BUSINESS

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SMC stockholders OK Kirin deal

By Doris C. Dumlao

STOCKHOLDERS of San Miguel Corp. yesterday ratified the sale of a 15-percent stake in the company to Japan's Kirin Brewery Co. Ltd.

For the first time, the five nominees of the Macapagal administration through the Presidential Commission on Good Government voted yesterday using the sequestered coco levy shares held by the Coconut Industry Investment Fund.

The passage of the Kirin deal was assured last weekend after the government and San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco arrived at an agreement. The government agreed to back the Kirin deal in exchange for San Miguel taking on five of its nominees on the company's board.

The five new directors who replaced the PCGG nominees appointed during the term of ousted President Estrada were: Nueva Ecija Rep. Pacifico Fajardo, Nestlé chair and CEO Juan Santos, GMA Network Inc. president Menardo Jimenez, former Security Group chief Leo Alvez and former Court of Appeals Justice Hector Hofilena.

The government now controls seven of the 15 board seats in SMC plus certain pro-rated stakes in various subsidiaries, including the two board seats each for state-controlled pension funds Government Service Insurance System and Social Security System.

San Miguel and Kirin approved the deal worth $540 million in principle in December.

Kirin is seeking the deal to expand its hold in Asia while San Miguel is eyeing the Japanese brewer's network to allow it to penetrate more markets in the region.

At the meeting, San Miguel shareholders approved an increase of the company's authorized capital stock to P22.5 billion from the current P15 billion to accommodate the Kirin transaction. About 83.5 percent of the shareholders approved the move.

Under the Kirin deal, the Japanese firm subscribed to 442.6 million newly issued SMC "B" shares at P63 per share, equivalent to two board seats.

The purchase of a 15-percent stake by Kirin diluted the CIIF stake in SMC to 26.8 percent while the pension funds' combined stake went down to 11.8 percent.

On the other hand, Cojuangco's stake was diluted from 22.1 to 19.3 percent, but Kirin, under the shareholders agreement, will vote in tandem with the SMC chair's shares.

Following the strategic entry of Kirin, San Miguel has earmarked another $1 billion to continue its acquisition binge here and abroad.

Cojuangco yesterday said the entry of Kirin gave the company more financial muscle to cope with the challenges of globalization, by expanding in current and new businesses that would benefit the company.

Vice chair Ramon Ang told reporters after the approval of the Kirin deal that the company would continue to scout for acquisition opportunities.

San Miguel earlier wiped out the $1-billion cash hoard built when Cojuangco first assumed office as chair with five major acquisitions during the last two years.

Ang said that on top of the fresh funds infused by Kirin, SMC could choose to borrow if it needed to raise cash for new acquisitions.

"Definitely, we'll be able to close another major acquisition in two to three months," Ang said.

San Miguel was likely to have posted a net profit of around P6.46 billion to P6.5 billion for 2001, a source within the SMC group said.

The source, who declined to be identified, said sales were likely to have been P122 billion. *With a report from Reuters*

Shell to ship 1.2M barrels of oil from Malampaya

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SHELL Philippines Exploration BV, project operator of the Malampaya oil and gas project, is set to deliver two more cargoes of crude totaling 1.2 million barrels to Chevron-Texaco's refinery in South Korea.

Shell country manager Eliseo Santiago said that Spex expected the Malampaya oil to have produced about 2 million barrels by May.

"We are delivering to Korea because (that firm) placed the highest bid," Santiago told reporters. "Our first shipment was 616,000 barrels."

He did not give details on pricing due to agreements on confidentiality.

The chief of Royal Dutch/Shell Group's local unit said the extended oil well test in Malampaya would take until May to finish.

"We will determine commercial viability within the year," he added.

On the other hand, Santiago noted that the Malampaya oil well's output was very significant compared to the country's total oil production in recent years.

According to latest data from the energy department, the country produced a total of only 420,000 barrels of crude oil in 2000.

Malampaya's 616,000 barrels were produced in just two months.

The oil well started producing early in December at an initial rate of 8,000 barrels a day, which went up to about 20,000 barrels later that month.

When this was announced, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. noted that the volume of production indicated a potentially commercial oil field.

"This is specially significant because we are trying to wean (the country) from the use of imported energy sources," Perez said.

The Malampaya oil field is considered the largest oil reserve in the country so far.

Persons familiar with the mater said the oil field could contain a reserve of between 17 million and 57 million barrels of recoverable oil.

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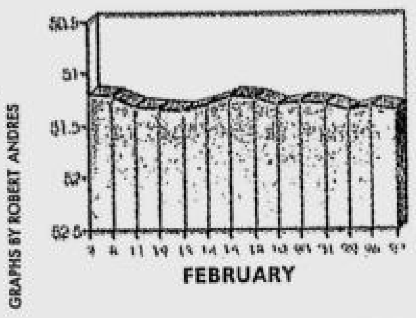

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As of 5 p.m., Feb. 27, 2002

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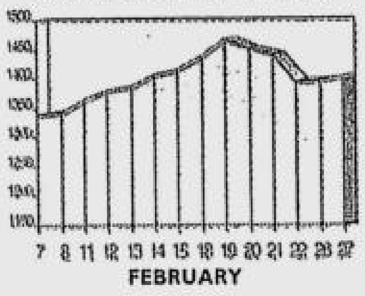
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 27, 2002

STOCK MARKET

Index heavyweights lift local stocks

STOCKS closed slightly higher yesterday on the strength of index-heavy issues Manila Electric Co. and San Miguel Corp., traders said.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

The 33-share composite index closed 6.91 points, or 0.49 percent, higher at 1,403.70 points. Earlier, the index hit a high of 1,419.66 points.

In the broader market, gainers and losers were nearly on an equal footing with 32 stocks up and 31 down, while the prices of 58 issues were unchanged.

Turnover was lower at P645.13 million from the previous P834.44 million.

"Investors are sticking to blue chips which have exciting stories to tell like Meralco, San Miguel and PLDT," said Efren Cruz, president of The Mutual Fund Management Company of the Philippines.

Shares of power distributor Meralco "B," the day's top traded issue with P133.59 million changing hands, ended 9.09 percent or P4 higher at P48.

"Everybody knows that the ERC (Energy Regulatory Commission) has to decide by June Meralco's petition to increase its rates and the growing consensus in the market is that Meralco will get a rate hike," said one fund manager.

Meralco has a pending application with the government since April 2000 to raise its basic rates by 30 centavos per kilowatt-hour. *Reuters*

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This massage will self-destruct

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

YESTERDAY, the Commission on Appointments was set to decide on the fate of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, more popularly known in my column as the Whiz.

A senator, as you know, who sits in the CA, wanted to block his confirmation. As of noon yesterday, word was the senator still planned to massage him with Section 20.

Well, for the past several months, the Whiz was getting from that certain CA member nothing but the car battery treatment. He was undergoing a torture test.

Now Section 20 is the most advanced technique in the hi-tech field of torture testing. It is highly complicated, in the league of rocket science and brain surgery.

Only technical guys like newspersons who have had seven cases of beer can begin to try to understand it. Section 20, in our language, goes this way: *Wala lang*!

In the intricacies of reasoning, Section 20 is in the same level as *"Ah, basta!"* In invoking Section 20, the only reason a CA member can cite is, simply, well, for no reason at all.

* * *

FOR no reason at all, therefore, just by invoking Section 20, any member of the CA can still derail the confirmation of the Whiz.

But it has been almost nine months since Gloriaetta named him finance secretary. Nine months! If this were only sex, his confirmation should be giving birth soon.

Supposedly, anyway, the Whiz played a role in the controversial "PEACe" bonds. Moreover, he allegedly had a hand in the "PEACe" bond controversy.

To top it all, the Whiz purportedly took part in the controversy involving the "PEACe" bonds. So there, as you can see, he already had three irregular acts!

Never mind that nothing has yet been proven. On the contrary, from my end, it looks like the Whiz did nothing that his mother should be ashamed of.

Marissa headed the NGO that made money out of trading the "PEACe" bonds. It was bad. She and the Whiz had the same mother.

* * *

COME on, why can't, even for just a brief moment of good sense, minus all the politics in his confirmation, our beloved CA just look at the qualifications of the guy?

The Whiz has a master's degree in business from the Harvard University in the United States. How many in the CA can say the same thing? Not even half a person!

In 1979, at a time when I was still trying to decide if I would look good in a combination of blue pants and brown shoes, the Whiz was already a banker.

This cute administration, as a matter of fact, plucked him from a high-paying job as managing director here of Deutsche Bank, which happens to be only one of the world's largest.

Look at that sacrifice! He gave up good pay to serve in the Cabinet, where he only gets free snacks during long meetings. A rejection by the CA is like doing him a favor.

It's competence, I think, which the business community sees in the Whiz. They are rallying behind him. I have yet to hear an executive who doesn't think highly of him.

* * *

IT'S hard to imagine that the CA, which has reasonable members—at least some are—will set aside his qualifications because of a mere suspicion about the "PEACe" bonds.

In the finance department, I heard, they were already confident that the Whiz would get the confirmation yesterday, unless he would get the Section 20 massage.

But I think that the hard-line members of the CA—hard line against the Whiz, that is—might have been already gone overboard. As I said, they are running out of reason.

In a way, just like in the movies, their use of the Section 20 massage oil will self-destruct in five seconds flat. People are tired already. Let's get on to the next move!

Up next in the economic agenda of this poverty-stricken nation is, of course, how to raise the money to finance today all the things that we needed several years ago.

Just when nobody wanted to lend us money, the Whiz breezed us through almost $2 billion in bond floats. I thought the CA would think that it amounted to something.

* * *

WHAT do Valenzuela, Malinta and Subic have in common? Well, you read about them in the newspapers everyday. It's there where auctions of SUVs and vans are done every month.

They all come from Japan, where they must be considered junk, by Japanese standards, but then they pass for "used vehicles" here—and IMPORTED, too.

Even the American Chamber of Commerce and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce noticed the popularity of imported junk vehicles. They wrote to Gloriaetta.

Well, the two chambers only complained about the unfair competition from junk vehicles from Japan. They asked Gloriaetta, "Please, just stop it already."

In the best radio program in town, Barangay 1026 on Angel Radyo (dzAR 1026 khz), Trade Secretary Mar Roxas yesterday did a "My Way." You know—The end is near.

He said this administration is only trying to find out what agency should swoop down on those auctions. To catch them in the act, as they say.

* * *

MAR has a simple thing to say about importation of used vehicles: "It's illegal."

Legally, as Mar explained the issue, there are only three exemptions, namely, for balikbayan, for special vehicles and for 10-seater diesel vans.

In other words, for the others, like those SUVs being sold in the parade-style auction *daw* in Valenzuela, Malinta and Subic, the prohibition rule applies.

Thanks to the LTO, those imported used vehicles have been "registered" even before you buy them. Mar said that's also not allowed under the law.

And how do those SUVs get into the country? They come in through Subic. No wonder, the Palace is already trying to find a way to boot somebody out of SBMA.

That's the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, which has a charter of its own, that says the SBMA head has a fixed term. How do you yank him out of there? Somebody must stop him quick.

FPI bucks changes to agri, fisheries law

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DOMESTIC producers said yesterday lawmakers should first determine whether the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act benefited farmers and fishermen rather than smugglers before making any amendments that would broaden the law's generous perks to include exemption from the value-added tax.

In a position paper, the Federation of Philippine Industries said the proposed review should include a closer scrutiny of all importation made under the law and relevant data on the companies, cooperatives, farmers or fishermen groups that availed of the duty-free perks.

Afma was enacted in 1997 to provide duty-free incentives on equipment and supplies imported by farmers and fishermen for their livelihood.

Local manufacturers criticized the law, saying the duty-free privileges were prone to abuse considering the hefty number of eligible products and equipment most of which were produced locally.

FPI said only after it had been determined that Afma was effective in spurring agricultural development should Congress consider expanding the incentives provided by the law.

The Senate ways and means committee is currently holding public hearings on three bills seeking to amend Afma.

The changes include granting VAT exemption and expanding the list of eligible beneficiaries to include individuals, cooperatives and other enterprises that import agricultural inputs.

FPI said only cooperatives and enterprises should be given VAT exemptions and the lawmakers ensure that safeguards would be put in place to check abuses.

FPI stressed that the list of eligible goods for tariff and VAT exemptions should be limited to products and equipment not produced locally or produced here but not in sufficient quality.

It suggested that lawmakers encourage farmers and fishermen to source their requirements domestically by granting tax credits equal to 100 percent of the value of the customs duties and VAT that would have been waived on the import of the same good.

BAP asks BIR to exempt long-term deposit certificates holders from VATA

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANKERS Association of the Philippines has asked the Bureau of Internal Revenue to exempt holders of long-term negotiable deposit certificates from paying the documentary stamp tax.

Bankers have warned that slapping the documentary stamp tax on long-term certificates, which are being promoted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as an alternative source of funds for lenders, will make these instruments unattractive.

A bank president said the BAP, an umbrella organization of some 40 commercial banks, wanted the BIR to issue a ruling that would exempt long-term certificates from the final withholding tax in line with its earlier policy to relieve instruments maturing in five years or more from this tax burden.

The BAP wanted the BIR to clarify whether the issuance of long-term certificates of deposits was covered by this earlier ruling.

Among the BAP's members, Standard Chartered Bank Philippines has been strongly lobbying for the BIR exemption as it has secured the approval from the central bank to issue as much as P3 billion worth of long-term negotiable certificates of deposits.

Standard Chartered Philippines president Annemarie Durbin said the bank might have to defer the issuance of the new instrument without a favorable opinion of the BIR.

"We may decide not to issue the NCDs without a favorable BIR ruling because the instrument would not be as attractive to investors and we, as issuer, would have to be penalized by paying a higher rate," Durbin said.

BIR Commissioner Rene Banez said the BIR would review its policies to see whether it could accommodate the BAP's request.

"We will check, but it does not follow that because long-term instruments are exempted from the final withholding tax that they will also be exempted from paying the documentary stamp tax," Banez said.

Gov't sets crackdown on erring steel firms

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry (DTI) has resumed its operations to ferret out manufacturers of below-par steel products, primarily galvanized iron sheets, after the Court of Appeals allowed the government to continue with its crackdown on violators.

Trade and Industry Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal Jr. yesterday led a monitoring team composed of the DTI-Bureau of Product Standards and the Philippine Iron and Steel Institute to conduct spot inspections in hardware stores in Metro Manila.

Cristobal said the CA issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) against the regional trial court (RTC) which issued a ruling last year stopping the DTI-BPS from implementing Philippine National Standard rules on GI sheets.

The CA's TRO would enable the DTI-BPS not only to pursue its campaign to rid the market of substandard steel products but also proceed with the public hearings against violators.

The case was filed by Sonic Steel, which was caught by a DTI roving team to have been selling inferior GI sheets that were later confirmed as substandard by laboratory tests by the Metal Institute for Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology.

The substandard GI sheets were mostly in the gauge 26 for roofing materials and they were 20 percent off the standard thickness of the steel sheet while the zinc coating was thin and minimal, leading to rusting within one to two years.

Sonic Steel and other errant steel makers have questioned the constitutionality and legality of the Philippine National Standards regulation and its implementing rules and regulations which have been in effect since 1987.

Aside from GI sheets, other substandard steel products that have proliferated in the market are rebars, aluminum-zinc coated steel sheets, pipes and tubes, LPG cylinders, structural steel, and common wire nails.

Bankers Dizon, Panlilio eyed as chair, president of PNB

By Clarissa S. Batino

FINANCE Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho yesterday said the government would have to choose from among its four nominees in Philippine National Bank the new chair and president of the country's sixth largest lender.

Sources said the government was considering to appoint seasoned bankers and incumbent PNB directors Francisco Dizon as chair and Vicente Panlilio as president.

The government had appointed banker Edward Go as chair but the latter chose to head instead the government-run United Coconut Planters Bank.

Ramon Sy, president of International Exchange Bank, had also considered accepting the offer to become the next PNB president but decided to back out at the last minute.

Thus, the government chose to look into its existing directors in PNB than hire another banker from outside.

Dizon is the former president of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. while Panlilio is the former senior vice president of Far East Bank.

The two other government directors in PNB are accounting expert and former finance undersecretary Flor Tarriela and PNB chair Norberto Nazareno who is also the president of state-run Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

"Choosing the new officers from among the current directors is under consideration," Camacho said.

Nazareno said that the new chair who would succeed him would likely come from the existing members of the PNB board.

Nazareno was appointed to chair PNB in May 2001 when the group of Lucio Tan agreed to convert part of the government's P25 billion in advances into state equity. He agreed to take on the role only during the transition much like PNB president Feliciano Miranda Jr.

Camacho said the government was still working on the memorandum of agreement with Tan on the conversion of part of the P25 billion in advances.

The MOA, originally scheduled for signing last Jan. 20 then reset to Feb. 8, has yet to be inked pending the final approval by the Department of Justice and blessings from Malacañang.

He said the justice department asked that it be given another week to decide.

Tarriela had been appointed to chair PNB's executive committee.

Camacho said the appointment of sugar baron Franklin Fuentebella as one of the six government nominees in PNB after a final debt-to-equity agreement was signed with Tan still needed the approval of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The BSP, he said, has to subject Fuentebella to its fit-and-proper test to determine if he was qualified to be a bank director.

Fuentebella was a former director of the Republic Planters Bank, now MayBank Philippines, for a brief period in the 1980s. Fuentebella chairs one of the rural banks in Negros Occidental and is president of a financing company.

In defending the administration's choice, Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the intention was to "diversify the background of the PNB directors."

The 11-member PNB board is currently composed of four nominees from the government, five from Tan's group, and two independent directors to represent the publicly listed PNB shares.

Camacho said once the MOA has been signed, the government would be entitled to six board seats.

Napocor to bid out coal deals

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE-OWNED National Power Corp. will bid out on April 4 two long-term coal supply contracts totaling 1.17 million metric tons exclusively among members of an Indonesian mining consortium.

Elisa Dayao, head of Napocor's corporate fuel management department, said in a statement each contract covered a yearly requirement of 195,000 metric tons.

The volume will be delivered in three batches for three years or a total of nine shipments.

The three-year supply contracts will partially cover the fuel needs of the 700-megawatt Pagbilao power plant in Quezon.

"We expect the agreements to be finalized by the end of April and will be effective by July," Dayao said.

The bidding will be exclusively for member-firms of the Indonesian Coal Mining Association pursuant to a government-to-government agreement signed last year.

The following firms are expected to take part in the bidding: PT Tambang Batubara Bukit Asam, PT Intitirta Primasakti, PT Bukit Baiduri Enterprise, PT Berau PT Arutmin Indonesia; PT Kaltim Prima, PT Sari Andara Persada, PT Tanito Harum, PT Gunung Bayan and PT Indominco.

The statement also quoted Napocor officer-in-charge Roland Quilala as saying the bilateral agreement guaranteed a long-term supply of coal under discounted prices.

"This agreement is reflective of our commitment to get as much cost savings from our deals as possible," Quilala said.

A memorandum of understanding between Napocor and ICMA was signed last Nov. 12, which allows Napocor to request a supply of up to 2 million tons a year "under a preferred pricing arrangement."

In an earlier interview, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. added that the MOU aimed to look into the possibility of direct trading between the two firms.

This will remove all brokers or middlemen between coal mines and coal plants, Perez said.

"(Such an arrangement may enable Napocor to buy coal) at a price of at least 10 percent less than what Napocor currently gets from the international market," he said.

On the other hand, Perez stressed that any dealings between Napocor and ICMA would still go through Napocor's bidding system.

"We stand firmly that all our coal purchases would be done through Napocor's electronic bidding process," he said.

Perez reiterated that the state firm was completely moving away from negotiated contracts.

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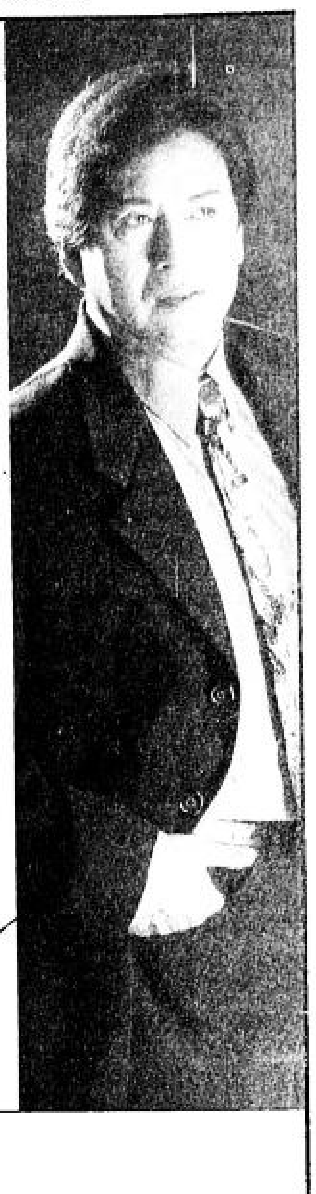

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Leung in, Garcia disqualified as PSE trims list of candidates

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange board decided yesterday to allow only nine non-brokers out of 18 nominated earlier to run for seats in its 15-man board on March 9.

Persons familiar with the situation said the board allowed PSE president Ernest Leung, whose nomination had been questioned, to run in the PSE's first elections since it was demutualized.

One nominee who was sidetracked was former PSE president Ramon Garcia. One source said Garcia was disqualified for a number of reasons related to legal restrictions specified in the Securities Regulation Code.

Asked to react to the board's decision, Garcia said he would contest it once he was formally informed of it.

He said he was willing to file a case in court to challenge the PSE board's decision.

Apart from Leung, the PSE board also allowed economist Cayetano Paderanga, constitutionalist Joaquin Bernas, ABS CBN chair Eugenio Lopez III and former Manila Electric Co. president Mario Camacho to run in the March 9 elections.

All five are incumbent members of the PSE board.

Among the new names running for seats in the board are former Philippine National Bank president Peter Favila, former Securities and Exchange Commission chair Rosario Lopez, former Petron Corp. chair Monico Jacob and former Customs Commissioner Tomas Apacible.

The nomination committee, which submitted the shortened list to the PSE board, was tasked to inform the candidates and ask them whether they would accept the nomination by March 1.

PSE sources said some of the nominees excluded from the short list were not disqualified but had already declined the nomination.

Garcia said he was considering several options should his disqualification be decided as final.

Garcia was disqualified because of the two-year rule that prohibited any person associated or affiliated with a stockbrokerage from running as a non-broker director.

Garcia said, however, he had legal grounds to contest the disqualification because the board waived the two-year rule in the case of Leung, who was chair of DBP Daiwa (concurrent with his former position as chair of the Development Bank of the Philippines) until late 2001.

Garcia was unceremoniously dismissed by the PSE board last year over a heated word war between him and Metro Pacific Corp. chair and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan.

Piltel a ₱3-B drag on PLDT's bottom line—Pangilinan

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. said it could have posted some P6.4 billion in net income last year if not for the losses of mobile phone unit Pilipino Telephone Corp.

"I think without the Piltel losses, our profits would have been P6.4 billion. But it went down to P3.4 (billion) because we reflected Piltel's losses of P3 billion for 2001," PLDT president and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan said in a news briefing on Tuesday.

Pangilinan explained that, starting July last year, PLDT was merely giving Piltel a P100-million "provisioning" each month, booking these as losses in PLDT's books.

Piltel's losses for the first half of the year, however, were still included in PLDT's books, resulting in a lower bottom line for PLDT.

"When the debt restructuring was completed in June last year and we have divested from a majority position to a minority position, the treatment of the minority stake allowed us to hold that investment as an investment account. So we have de-consolidated Piltel's accounts from the books of PLDT and are merely provisioning. But it's a provisioning against an investment account, not reflecting anymore the losses of Piltel," he said.

PLDT's investment level in Piltel as of July last year was placed at P1.6 billion. After six months of provisioning, the telecommunications firm now had a balance of about P1 billion. If the P100-million provisioning would continue every month without fail, PLDT's exposure in Piltel would be zero by October.

"The investment level as of July last year was P1.6 billion. That was the investment amount in the books of PLDT, so we have taken out about P600 million already. Starting this year, the intention is to substantially or fully provision against the balance of P1 billion," he said.

As for new infusions into Piltel, Pangilinan said it was "unlikely" for PLDT to make any.

"A basic principle for our subsidiaries is that they be self-sufficient. We can't be forever feeding the subsidiaries with money," he said.

Pangilinan expressed confidence in Piltel's ability to further improve, as the cellular firm posted positive earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization last month.

"It looks like the trend is that it's likely to show positive Ebitda this year. The likelihood of Piltel calling on cash support from PLDT is quite low," he said.

Piltel's net revenues grew 8.1 percent in 2001 to P3.3 billion from a year earlier's P3.07 billion. This was driven by the strong performance of its prepaid global system for mobile communications brand, "Talk 'N Text."

Maynilad buys time to settle $100M in debts

MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. said yesterday it was able to convince its craeditors to give it six more months to pay some $100 million in debts.

"Except for some documents that needs to be finalized, we have got the approval for another extension. We have another six months," Maynilad project finance director Francis Gilles Puno said in an interview.

Puno said with the reprieve, Maynilad would now be able to concentrate on securing $350 million worth of term loans. The company has been trying to convince the government to guarantee these loans. *Christine A. Gaylican*

Manufacturing output down 11.3% in Dec.

THE COUNTRY'S manufacturing volume fell 11.3 percent in December from a year earlier, as local producers relied more on the domestic market due to a global economic slowdown.

In a report released yesterday, the National Statistics Office said the contraction in December was worse than the 10.8 percent posted in November.

Analysts said the deterioration suggested that the country's manufacturers were still cautious about the economic outlook in the coming months.

The biggest losers—posting double-digit contractions—were manufacturers in the following sectors: petroleum products, 14.7 percent; tobacco, 4.5 percent; paper and paper products, 41.3 percent; furniture and fixtures, 9.9 percent; and, wood/wood products, 10.8 percent.

The few sectors that bucked the downtrend were basic goods like footwear/wearing apparel, which gained 12.4 percent, and food, 12.5 percent.

Other gainers were non-electrical machinery, 24.7 percent; non-metallic products, 8.3 percent; and publishing and printing, 17.3 percent.

According to the NSO report, the value of production in December also slipped 0.1 percent from a 0.9-percent gain a month earlier.

Westlink Global Equities analyst James Lago said the continuing contraction in manufacturing output did not come as a surprise, particularly in view of the slump in demand for electronics, the country's biggest dollar earner.

Lago added that it remained to be seen whether the expected rebound in the US economy would materialize.

"If there will be any rebound in the local manufacturing volume this year, it will have to be locally driven because, as far as exports are concerned, the bulk of our exports is still geared toward electronics, and we're only on first base," he said.

Lago also warned that despite the more positive outlook on world growth this year, the Philippines would likely be affected by a looming shift in Asia manufacturing activities to China, which is now a member of the World Trade Organization.

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DISCLOSURES

SAN Miguel Corp. has moved its investors' briefing on Feb. 28 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. It will be held at the Garden Ballroom of the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel.

* * *

FORTUNE Cement Corp. is set to amend its corporate by-laws to designate its president, rather than the chair, as chief executive.

* * *

THE **PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co.** has declared the following cash dividends in favor of stockholders as of March 15: $1.029412 per series III convertible stock, P4.675 per series V convertible preferred stock, 9.925 US cents per series VI convertible preferred stock and 10.179725 yen per series VII convertible preferred stock. These shall be payable on April 15.

* * *

THE **MANILA Electric Co.** has moved its annual stockholders' meeting from April 30 to May 28.

* * *

EDSA Properties Holdings Inc. has declared a cash dividend of 3.37 centavos per share to all shareholders as of March 13. Also declared was a 57-percent stock dividend. The company will also increasae its authorized capital stock from P4.5 billion to P6 billion. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Wednesday, February 27, 2002)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	67.5	68.5	67.5	68	58,200
Citystate Savings Bank	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	31	31	30	30	998,300
First E-Bank Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.04	2.1	82,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	214	215	210	210	26,430
Rizal Comm Banking Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	46,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	20	20.25	20	20.25	100,900
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	70,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	50,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1295	1295	1290	1290	1,010
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1010	1020	1010	1020	11,580
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	31	31	31	31	7,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	8,000,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	815	815	805	805	3,350
Ipeople Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	10,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0875	0.0875	0.08	0.0825	76,900,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.2	41,000
Piltel	0.54	0.56	0.48	0.49	16,330,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	500	505	497.5	497.5	144,200
Ivantage Corp.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	450,000
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.022	32,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	32	32.5	32	32.5	169,900
Manila Electric Co. B	46	48	46	48	2,836,500
Petron Corp.	1.88	1.92	1.86	1.86	4,075,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.12	320,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	714,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	210,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.52	1.6	1.52	1.6	172,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	180,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.18	2.18	2.12	2.12	1,162,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	10,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	10,500
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	23.5	23.5	23.25	23.5	74,800
RFM Corp.	1.38	1.4	1.36	1.38	1,422,000
San Miguel Corp. A	48	48.5	48	48	113,800
San Miguel Corp. B	63	63.5	62.5	63.5	848,300
Universal Robina Corp.	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	1,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Ayala Corp.	6.7	6.8	6.6	6.6	8,002,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.88	2.04	1.88	2.02	690,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.83	0.83	0.82	0.82	230,000
APC Group Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	410,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	151,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	570,000
ATN Holdings Inc	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	55,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	80,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.86	0.88	0.83	0.87	11,660,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	200,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.15	670,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.34	0.39	0.34	0.35	1,320,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.33	4,380,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.115	0.12	11,080,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.044	0.044	0.04	0.041	800,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	110,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.04	170,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	32	33	32	32.5	1,169,100
Global Equities Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.17	0.17	1,150,000
Ionics Inc.	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.1	30,000
J.G Summit Holdings Inc.	1.9	1.96	1.88	1.88	169,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	29,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.83	0.84	0.82	0.84	1,400,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	10,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.5	0.55	0.5	0.55	450,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.35	0.3	0.3	6,550,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.36	0.33	0.33	4,590,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	1,150,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	50,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	35,000
Uniol Res. & Holdings Co.	0.0875	0.1	0.08	0.08	250,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.16	600,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	10,000
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	4.9	5	4.9	5	10,000
Federal Chemicals Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	17,000
Picop Resources Inc	0.085	0.086	0.085	0.085	200,000
Pryce Corp	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,700,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	111,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.52	0.53	0.51	0.51	6,000,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.62	2,190,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	130,000
Manila Jockey Club	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	86,800
Mondragon Intl Phils. Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	400,000
Philippine Racing Club	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	5,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	31	32	31	31.5	354,500
DMCI Holdings Inc.-Pref.	775	775	775	775	100
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.64	1.66	1.64	1.66	22,000
Globe Telecom Hldg (Pdr)	815	815	800	800	700
Omico Corp. Warrant	0.0014	0.0014	0.0014	0.0014	140,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,200
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,000
Philweb.Com Inc.-Warrants	0.006	0.006	0.0056	0.0056	152,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.9	7	6.8	6.9	16,039,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
Cebu Holdings Inc	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	200,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	4,290,000
Cyber Bay Corp	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.5	5,810,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.31	4,340,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	10,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2.3	2.36	2.3	2.34	5,612,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.39	0.39	3,960,000
Robinsons Land Corp	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.8	1,627,000
Urbancorp Realty Dev. Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	20,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	5,000,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.043	0.043	0.041	0.041	20,500,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	440,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	190,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	1,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0046	0.0046	0.0044	0.0046	30,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't. Corp.	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	1,000,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.023	0.023	0.019	0.021	1,200,000
Interport Res.	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	3,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	36,000,000
Pacifica	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	8,500,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.08	0.08	0.075	0.0775	5,600,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	1,446,620	55,598,675.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	659,593,410	446,250,125.00
PRO	41,829,000	141,046,440.00
Mining	58,130,000	1,154,350.00
OIL	54,300,000	832,850.00
GRAND TOTALS:	815 299 030	644,882,440.00

AVERAGES

Banks & Fin Svc	563.48	UP 2.12
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,916.05	UP 7.99
PRO	623 96	UP 4.46
Mining	1,377 05	UP 2.12
OIL	2.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	740.23	UP 2.50
Composite	1,403 70	UP 6.91

NO. OF ADVANCES: 32; NO. OF DECLINES: 31; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 68;
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CURRENCIES

Feb. 27, 2002 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.157140	1.000000	51.3290
Japan	Yen	0.008600	0.007432	0.3815
United Kingdom	Pound	1.639667	1.417000	72.7332
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.148542	0.128370	6.5891
Switzerland	Franc	0.677521	0.585514	30.0538
Canada	Dollar	0.718944	0.621311	31.8913
Singapore	Dollar	0.631110	0.545405	27.9951
Australia	Dollar	0.595236	0.514403	26.4038
Bahrain	Dinar	3.069499	2.652661	136.1584
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.308571	0.266667	13.6878
Brunei	Dollar	0.630559	0.544929	27.9707
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000113	0.000098	0.0050
Thailand	Baht	0.026413	0.022826	1.1716
UAE	Dirham	0.315125	0.272331	13.9785
Korea	Won	0.000879	0.000760	0.0390
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.864200	44.3585
Brazil	Real	0.482142	0.416667	21.3871
Denmark	Kroner	0.134520	0.116252	5.9671
India	Rupee	0.023809	0.020576	1.0561
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.304511	0.263158	13.5076
Mexico	New Peso	0.127252	0.109971	5.6447
New Zealand	Dollar	0.483956	0.418235	21.4676
Norway	Kroner	0.129405	0.111832	5.7402
Pakistan	Rupee	0.019317	0.016694	0.8569
South Africa	Rand	0.101673	0.087866	4.5101
Sweden	Kroner	0.110187	0.095224	4.8878
Syria	Pound	0.022689	0.019608	1.0065
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.033071	0.02858	1.4670
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.289285	0.25	12.8323

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Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF REVISION OF RATE SCHEDULE TO COMPLY WITH REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9136, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASES NOS. 2001-951

IBAAN ELECTRIC AND ENGINEERING CORPORATION (IEEC)
Applicant

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

Notice is hereby given of the filing by applicant Ibaan Electric and Engineering Corporation (IEEC) on December 20, 2001 of an application for approval of revision of rate schedule to comply with Republic Act No. 9136 with prayer for provisional authority docketed as ERC Case No. 2001-951. The applicant's proposed restructuring and/or reformatting of its existing rate structure in accordance with the prescribed Uniform Filing Requirements will result in an increase in its existing rates by P0.4418.

The Commission has set the application for hearing on March 4 and 5, 2002 at nine o'clock (9:00 A.M.) in the morning at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable FE B. BARIN, Chairman, and the Honorables MARY ANNE B. COLAYCO, OLIVER B. BUTALID, CARLOS R. ALINDADA and LETICIA V. IBAY, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 7th day of February, 2002 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) FRUCTUOSO C. LAGUNZAD, JR.
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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late NATALAI C. WYSON has been extrajudicially settled among her heirs per Doc #408; Page #83; Book #34; Series of 2002 before Notary Public Atty. Norman P. Bagriel PTR 548466
(PDI - 2/28, 3/7 & 14, 2002)

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This prayer was found in the fiftieth year of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In 1505 it was sent from the Pope to Emperor Charles when he was going into battle. Whoever shall read this prayer or hear it or keep it about themselves, shall never die a sudden death, or be drowned, nor shall poison take effect on them; neither shall they fall into the hands of the enemy, or shall be burned in any fire or shall be overpowered in battle.

Say for nine mornings for anything you may desire. It has never been known to fail so be sure you really want what you ask.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You, no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your Perpetual Glory. Amen.

ENRON executive Sherron Watkins (left), former Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling (center) and the current president and COO of Enron Jeff McMahon (right) raise their hands to testify before the Senate committee on commerce, science and transportation on Feb. 26 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. AFP

Japan economic revival package targets share prices, not deflation

TOKYO—A policy package to fight the deflation plaguing Japan's economy to be formalized on Wednesday looks certain to miss its stated goal, but many critics say that was never its true aim anyway.

Instead, policymakers are shooting for another target: keeping share prices afloat until the end of the business year next month.

In part, analysts said, regulators were seeking to achieve that objective by tightening rules on the short-selling of equities some authorities blame for sharp share price declines.

Officials have also been demonstrating adroitness in hinting that bolder measures could be in store if a crisis draws nigh.

Short-term success, though, could carry a costly price tag of further damage to policymakers' credibility with markets.

"Of course there is a long-term cost. That cost is one of credibility . . . because their ability to affect market expectations is progressively diminished," said Richard Jerram, chief economist at ING Barings in Tokyo.

Markets and economists have already been digesting the steps expected to be approved by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's panel of economic advisors at a meeting later on Wednesday.

A draft of proposals leaked on Tuesday proved as lackluster as most had anticipated. "To end deflation, you have to reduce supply, or excess capacity, and stimulate demand," said Ron Bevacqua, chief economist at Commerz Securities in Tokyo.

"The two are contradictory, because reducing supply reduces demand, so you have to be fair and say it's not going to be easy," he added. "But what they are talking about has nothing to do with either reducing supply or stimulating demand . . . This is a market support package, not an anti deflation package."

Unimpressed investors pushed the Tokyo stock market's Nikkei share average down 0.91 percent after the leaks on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, however, investors seemed to have shrugged off their gloom and the benchmark average soared 3.63 percent to close at 10,573.09.

Free-market response?

Analysts, however, said the share price jump had far more to do with reluctance to sell the market short than with real hopes of policy cures for the deflation that has plagued the world's second-biggest economy for three years.

On Tuesday, the Financial Services Agency (FSA), the government's top financial watchdog, said it would penalize Credit Lyonnais, Bear Stearns, Deutsche Securities and Nikko Salomon Smith Barney for violating regulations on short-selling.

And the draft anti-deflation package said a further tightening of short-selling rules and surveillance were in store.

"There's a degree of suspicion that it might not be a particularly free-market response," ING Barings' Jerram said.

Others were far blunter, adding that public pension funds appeared to be buying shares to offset any display of market disappointment with the package.

"Only two factors were behind today's rally—the lack of sellers due to the FSA's tighter regulations on short-selling, and index-based buying by public pension funds," said Hitoshi Ichio, strategist at Commerz Securities.

Holding the line

Financial Services Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa made crystal clear on Tuesday why giving share prices a boost matters.

With the Nikkei at or above 10,000, he told a parliamentary panel, banks have no need for an infusion of taxpayers' money to bolster their capital and help dispose of non-performing loans.

"We have done various simulations and if (Nikkei) stocks maintain 10,000, it should be roughly ample," Yanagisawa said.

The top banking regulator, however, also said that a "pre-emptive" infusion of public funds could not be ruled out. *Reuters*

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Sunday
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

China says WTO membership to cut 20 million farm jobs

BEIJING—China warned starkly Wednesday that its recent entry to the World Trade Organization will lead to the loss of an estimated 20 million farming jobs.

The state-run China Daily quoted Xue Liang, director of the Ministry of Agriculture's development planning department, as saying Chinese experts had come up with the estimate.

The ministry, which did not specify a time frame for the job losses, said China already had 100 million surplus rural workers, the report said.

Beijing, which traditionally excludes the countryside from its much-derided official unemployment figures, has recently begun admitting that rural joblessness is a major problem.

Earlier this month the Ministry of Labor and Social Security gave the even higher figure of 160 million rural unemployed.

The labor ministry estimated 20 percent of the 800 million-strong rural population were idle and admitted that China was facing a crisis only likely to get worse as the country opens up to global competition.

China's inefficient agriculture industry, comprised mainly of low-yield small farms, is expected to face severe difficulties as protective tariffs come down under the terms of WTO membership, sealed late last year.

Increased imports of foreign agricultural products are expected to badly hit what are often more expensive and low quality domestic goods.

The agriculture ministry has pledged to speed up reforms to ease the unemployment problem facing farmers, the China Daily said.

"The problem of surplus rural laborers will become even more serious in major grain, cotton and oil-producing areas," Xue was quoted as saying while delivering a report to the agriculture and rural affairs committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament.

The NPC, which begins its annual full session in Beijing next week, is likely to discuss the rural unemployment problem, observers say.

Experts have said China's problem is that too many farmers are growing crops such as grains, which are not labor intensive. *AFP*

Bank of Japan supports Koizumi anti-deflation plan

TOKYO—The Bank of Japan threw support behind Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's anti-deflation package Wednesday, as skepticism grew over whether the revival plan would boost the nation's slumping economy.

Tokyo stocks rallied more than 2 percent in early morning trading on news that BOJ Gov. Masaru Hayami indicated the central bank might inject more money into the system to reverse the trend of tumbling prices, or deflation.

By either cutting interest rates or buying more government bonds, the bank would fulfill a key element of the anti-deflation package to be unveiled later Wednesday by Koizumi's top economic aides.

Ahead of the official announcement, however, even Koizumi was hedging on the plan, which was being criticized by some analysts as doing too little.

"This is a long-term battle. It's not a quick fix," Koizumi told reporters. "It's not a panacea, where once we announce it, we can say, hey, the problem is fixed."

Prices in Japan have been in a freefall for more than two years, undermining corporate profits, slashing property values and increasing debt burdens - all bad news for Japan as it struggles through its third recession in a decade.

Koizumi's anti-deflation package tackles a list of economic woes - most of which had long been targets of reform.

Topping the roster is wiping out bad debt, buttressing the sinking stock market, extending credit to small businesses and increasing consumer spending.

But many analysts wondered how deep the reforms would cut.

"It's window dressing," said Ryo Hino, an analyst with JP Morgan in Tokyo. "They are just leaving options open and making no decisions until they are backed into a corner.

"People want the government to make a formal commitment," Hino said. *AP*

Airlines facing most serious challenge ever, analyst says

SINGAPORE—Global aviation faces its biggest challenge yet with several airlines in a precarious financial situation and at risk of folding, an industry expert said Wednesday.

To survive and emerge fitter from the current economic downturn, airlines have to be prepared for industry-wide consolidation, Peter Harbison, managing director of the Sydney-based Center for Asia-Pacific Aviation, said.

"We're at a stage now where—genuinely I don't think it's a massive exaggeration—we can say there is almost no airline in the world at present which isn't actually considering whether it can survive," he told delegates at the AirFreight Expo 2002 conference, held in conjunction with Asian Aerospace.

"There are not many who can safely say in 12 months (they) will still be here and operating in their current form."

Harbison said aviation was in a sorry state in the Asia-Pacific region, and the financial woes of airlines "will lead almost inevitably to mergers."

Singapore Airlines, formerly among the world's most profitable carriers, is now staring at the possibility of a first-ever financial loss.

The carrier has embarked on a series of cost-cutting measures including a freeze on hiring and a deferment in taking delivery of new planes.

In Australia, the attempted sale of failed carrier Ansett collapsed Wednesday with some 3,000 employees of Ansett Mark II—the remnants of the carrier's original 17,000-strong workforce—losing their jobs for a second time.

Ansett was originally grounded last September by its then-owner, Air New Zealand, under the weight of a crippling $1.8-billion debt.

Air New Zealand has since reverted back to state ownership.

Where privatization was once the buzzword, the pressure was now on governments to help their flag carriers.

"We're now almost looking at a reverse revolution," Harbison said.

"Governments are becoming more involved. Economic pressures will inevitably accelerate changes to airline ownership which will be manifested in the form of alliances and (government ownership)," he said.

In Malaysia, the government re-nationalized the flag carrier in February 2001 after buying back a 29-percent stake from tycoon Tajudin Ramli at more than twice the prevailing market value, a deal widely seen as a bail-out.

Despite his bleak prognosis, Harbison said aviation still had a bright future but "the question really for us now is when that is going to be." *AFP*

Most Singaporeans happy with jobs—survey

SINGAPORE—A survey of Singaporeans has found most workers in the tightly regulated city state are happy with their jobs and do not consider the salary of great importance.

They also prefer to work more than 40 hours a week and like an element of stress in the workplace.

The survey by global recruitment company Business Trends, conducted at a time of recession forced paycuts and retrenchments, showed 64 percent of Singaporeans were either "happy or very happy" with their current position.

On a scale of factors deemed important by workers, 43 percent opted for "positive morale", followed by training and education (39 percent), challenging work (31 percent), promotion prospects (25 percent), benefits (24 percent), and with pay considered very important by just 23 percent.

"It's clear that to many employees, money isn't everything," said Dhirendra Shantilal, the managing director of Asia, Business Trends.

"In fact, employees recognize the value and importance of training and education as an essential component of sustainable employability."

Most satisfied in Singapore were clerical, sales and service workers (68 percent), followed by managers and professionals (65 percent).

At the other end of the scale, only 29 percent of associate professionals and trades people said they were happy with their lot.

Workers given more demanding and moderately stressful tasks appeared the happiest.

Some 55 percent of the 3,000 people surveyed at the end of 2001 and early 2002 found their jobs stressful but manageable.

"This same group was also the happiest in their jobs, suggesting that ensuring the right level of manageable stress is critical in achieving the optimum workplace," Business Trends said in a statement. *AFP*

Greenspan to lay out view on US economic recovery

WASHINGTON—Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan was set to outline for Congress on Wednesday how he sees the US economic recovery evolving as global markets waited with bated breath for fresh hints of encouragement.

The world's most influential central banker was scheduled to unveil his biannual analysis of the economy's condition before the House Financial Services Committee at 10 a.m. (1500 GMT) and to take questions afterward.

His testimony comes against a backdrop of mostly positive recent economic indicators that, on balance, augur well for the future. Numbers out early this year prompted him to advance a cautiously optimistic view on Jan. 24, when he said the economy was "at this point turning, as best I can judge."

And analysts think the data that have trickled out since will strengthen the optimistic tone further, although the Fed chair is likely to hold to his habitual caution.

The issue for economists and investors is how much more strongly Greenspan might present the case for a recovery and whether he will deliver any hints about when the Fed might look at unwinding some of 2001's 11 interest rate cuts—although such tightening is still seen many months in the future.

"I would argue that he's going to talk about both signs of improvement to the economy and I think he's going to talk about some of the lingering downside risks," said Richard Berner, chief economist at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter in New York.

But the tone, said Berner, likely will be "distinctly more upbeat (than Jan. 24) because we've had a lot of news since then that I think makes things look a whole lot better."

Although most economists believe the recession has ended, many are predicting a less-than-robust recovery.

Atlanta Fed president Jack Guynn said on Monday that the climb out of recession will be slower than past rebounds, with housing and consumer spending—which have not softened as much as is typical in most downturns—unlikely to offer as significant a "kick" as they have in the past. ***Reuters***

US consumer confidence falls but recovery on track

WASHINGTON—Gingerly recovering US consumer confidence took a sharp hit in February, a survey showed Tuesday, but experts said the recession-bound US economy remained on track for recovery.

Accounting scandals and a weak labor market had unnerved people, analysts said, dragging down the Conference Board's consumer confidence index to 94.1 points from January's five-month high of 97.8 points.

Wall Street analysts had forecast a figure of 97 points.

Still, experts said the decline in the index was not necessarily a harbinger of a drop in consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of US economic activity.

"Even though consumer confidence dipped in February, I see no cause for worry," said Oscar Gonzalez, economist at John Hancock Financial Services.

"Consumers have remained on a fairly even keel throughout the downturn. They are not about to roll over now."

The private economic research group's expectations index slid from 97.6 points to 93.6. The present situation index slumped from 98.1 points to 94.8, it said.

Wall Street, which had opened higher, tumbled on the data. The blue chip barometer, the Dow Jones industrials average, was down 45.46 points, or 0.45 percent, at 10,100.25 in early afternoon trade.

But experts said the markets were overreacting.

"It is two steps forwards, one step back. The evidence is it is more of a pause than a kind of deterioration," said Conference Board economist Delos Smith.

Consumers were uncertain about the pace of recovery and the risks ahead, he said.

Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan was set to lay out his assessment to US lawmakers in a six-monthly review of the economy's prospects on Wednesday, Smith noted.

"Mr. Greenspan will probably say the same kind of thing as I am: it is still unknown how robust the expansion is going to be, but at least we know the deterioration is over." ***AFP***

China implements new investment guidelines

BEIJING—China will implement new foreign investment guidelines this year, incorporating Beijing's commitments to open up its market after accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), state press said Wednesday.

The regulations classify overseas investment into four categories—encouraged, permitted, restricted and banned—and take effect on April 1, replacing rules issued in 1995, the China Securities Journal reported.

In agriculture, foreign investment will be encouraged in the areas of technology, transport, energy and raw materials and additionally in meeting market demand, improving the quality of products and developing new markets.

Investment in capital-intensive projects such as infrastructure, energy and transport, including coal mines, electricity generation, railways and highway construction will also be encouraged, the paper said.

Additionally, overseas funding in environmental protection, energy efficiency as well as investment in the development of China's less well-off central and western regions will be promoted.

China experienced a boom in foreign investment in January, the first full month after it joined the WTO.

Foreign direct investment surged 33.5 percent in January from the same month last year, foreign trade ministry figures said this month.

In the same month, contracted investment, which gives an indication of future investment inflows, rose 48 percent.

The English-language China Daily newspaper also said Wednesday that the new regulations would encourage foreign investors to play a part in the reform of China's lumbering state-owned enterprises (SOE) reform by taking stakes in them.

It cited an unnamed official as saying the government planned to sell a certain amount of SOE shares to foreigners over the next five years to speed up restructuring, and may even allow foreign investors to hold some controlling stakes.

To further push investment in the impoverished west, certain sectors and projects classified as "restricted" in other regions may be put into the "encouraged" category if they are carried out there, the China Securities Journal added.

The "restricted" includes some technology, energy consumption and environmentally unfriendly projects, and certain mineral exploitation.

"Banned" investment includes areas which threaten national security or other interests, those that cause pollution and projects that affect land conservation, the newspaper said. ***AFP***

Top US CEOs to give outlook at Florida meet

MIAMI—America's top corporate leaders on Wednesday gather at a Florida resort under skies clouded by worries over sluggish economic growth and dodgy bookkeeping.

The 125 chief executives scheduled to attend the three-day affair organized by The Business Council reads like a Who's Who of Corporate America, including the CEOs of General Electric Co., Johnson & Johnson, Dell Computer Corp., AT&T, Alcoa and Cisco Systems.

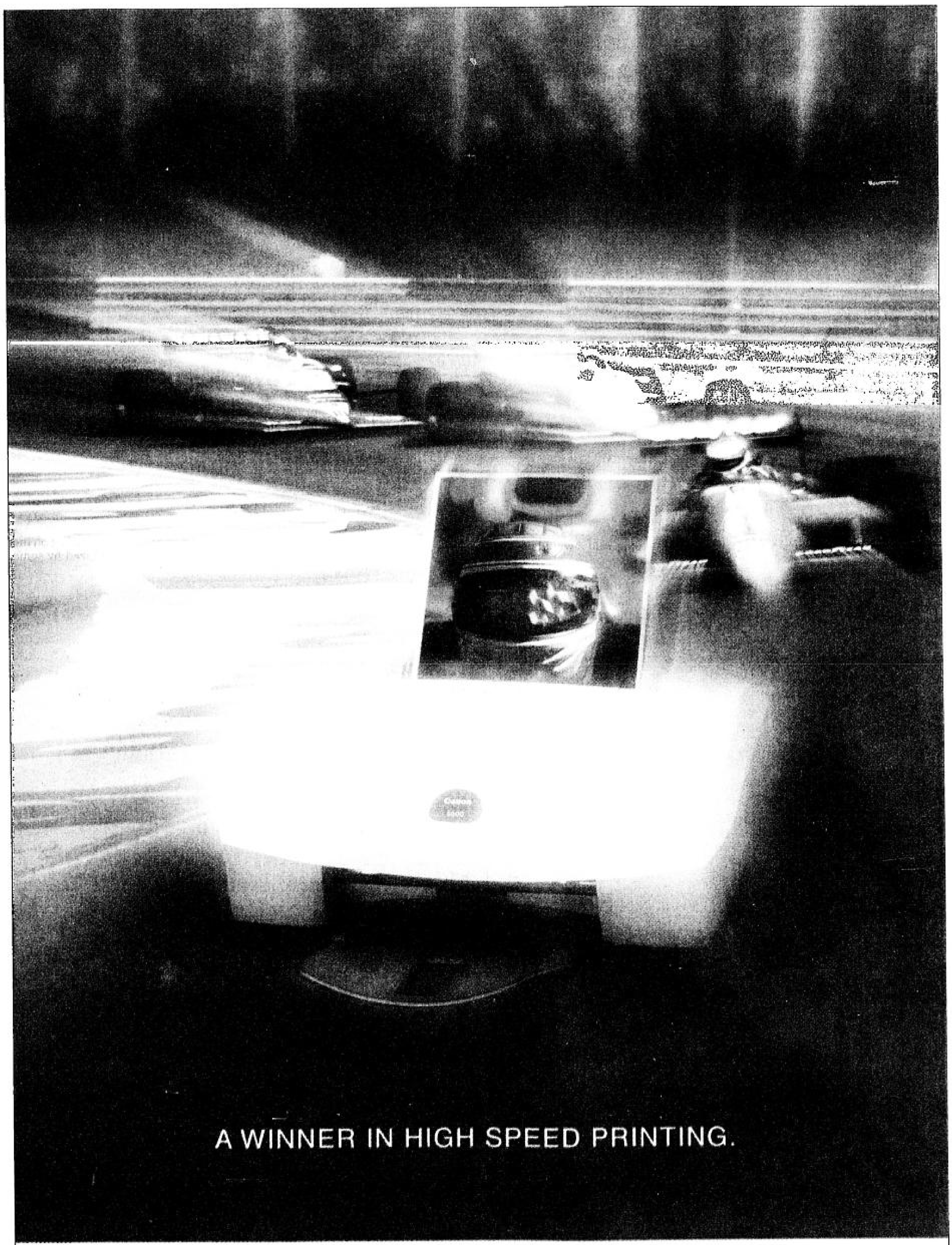
Retired CEOs also attend seminars, cocktail parties, dinners and golf outings at the Tony Boca Raton Resort and Club, south of Palm Beach on Florida's east coast. But they do not participate in a closely watched survey of active chief executives scheduled to be released on Wednesday afternoon.

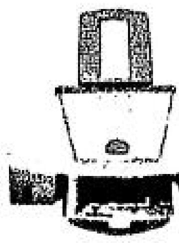
The survey will detail boardroom expectations about the economy in 2002, capital spending plans and which sectors look most promising for growth and investment, according to James Fisher, a spokesperson for the Business Council's chair, Sprint Corp. CEO William Esrey.

The meeting takes place against a backdrop of economic uncertainty: A string of interest cuts by the US Federal Reserve—11 times last year alone—has failed to revive a wobbly US economy. A rebound is in the making, the pundits have predicted, but nobody's sure when.

The spectacular collapse of energy trader Enron Corp. has dented trust in Big Business and has investors on edge about the potential for new revelations of improper accounting at a major US company. In addition, sagging share prices in the two-year bear market have most chief executives fight for investor approval—and some even for their jobs.

The answers from leaders in construction, drugs, finance, manufacturing, technology, electronics and defense will matter to financial markets, which have been getting mixed signals about a US economy that has been in recession since March. ***Reuters***





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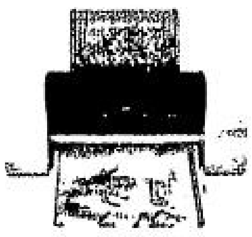

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The implementation of DA Administrative Order No. 25, Series of 2001, otherwise known as "Issuance of a Safety Compliance Certificate for, and a Chain of Custody Certification Check List on, Imports of Meat and Meat Products for Food as Requirement for Exports to the Philippines" issued **10 December 2001** and published **11 February 2002**, is hereby deferred.

This will allow time for public consultations on the specific guidelines and the accreditation of the organization to undertake the certification.

In this regard, a Public Consultation will be held at **10:00 a.m.** on **04 March 2002** at the Apacible Hall, NAFC Building, DA Compound, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City. All stakeholders are requested to attend.

(Sgd.) **LEONARDO Q. MONTEMAYOR**
Secretary

(PDI – Feb. 28, 2002)

INQUIRER TRiViA

By BONG BARRAMEDA

On deck

Q. Why are there 52 cards in a deck?

A. The number of cards in a modern deck was most likely influenced by the lunar year. There are as many cards as there are weeks in a year. Also, the total sum of the cards -- counting aces as one, Jacks as 11, Queens as 12 and Kings as 13, is about the same as the number of days in the year. Nobody knows for certain where playing cards originated. The Chinese were mostly probably the first to use them, since they were the first people to use paper and paper money. The earliest reference to cards comes from the 10th century, during the time of the Liao Dynasty.

For the Record. The roots of poker go back almost 3,000 years to a game called *As*, which was played in Persia. Pairs, three-of-a-kind, full house and four-of-a-kind were all used, as well as the chief element of poker: bluff. The game was introduced to Europe during the Crusades and developed in Spain under the name *primero*.

Famous First. On February 20, 1962, astronaut John Glenn, 41, circled the Earth three times in under five hours to become the first American to orbit the planet. After ten postponements because of bad weather and technical problems, Glenn's flight aboard the Mercury spacecraft Friendship7 went without hitch from blastoff at Cape Canaveral, Florida, to splashdown in the Atlantic near Puerto Rico. Glenn was a US Marine corps pilot in both World War II and the Korean War.

WORD WATCH

Astronaut (as truh nŏt) : from the Greek *astron* ("star") + *nautes* ("sailor").

PDI – February 28, 2002

Nakakasabay ka ba sa ikot ng mundo?

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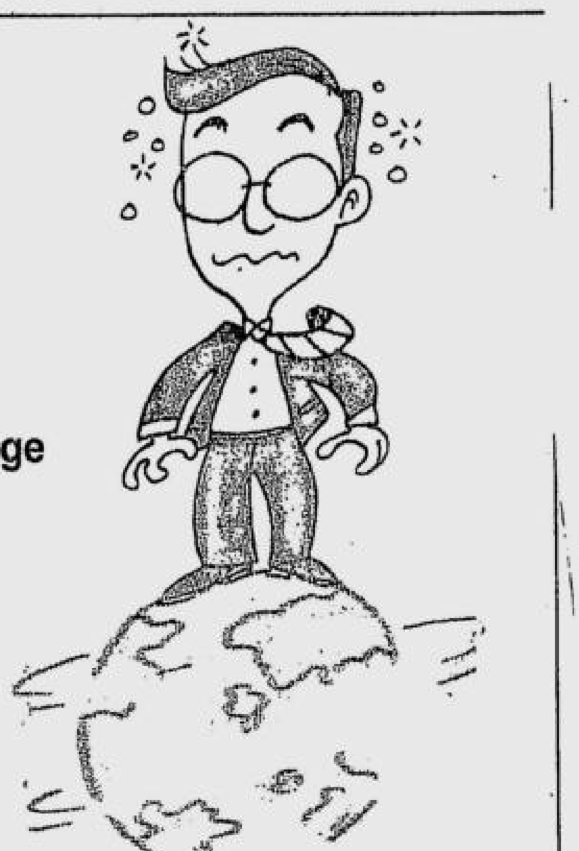

Attend the **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER People *at* Work *Live!* Seminar Series** on Change Management

March 18, 2002 (Monday)
MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS
Tita Datu Puangco, President, Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting, Inc., will discuss the sources of stress in the workplace and how living the present moment will help you achieve more with less strain. She will share the key to enjoying work which is living "the rainbow life" to ensure an integrated and balanced life.

March 19, 2002 (Tuesday)
SURVIVING WORKPLACE CHANGE
Lirio O. Mapa, Vice President, Center for Leadership and Change, Inc., will talk about how you can prepare yourself for changes. She will also tackle the paradigms and principles that can help you survive workplace changes.

March 20, 2002 (Wednesday)
LEADING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
Mark Mackenzie, Managing Principal, S & G International Consulting, Inc., will focus on how you can lead change, not just from the senior management perspective, but from those in all levels of the organization. He will discuss how different types of change are identified, measured and managed by all employees.

TIME: 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
VENUE: Santiago Hall, Mezzanine, Equitable PCIB Tower 1, Makati Ave. cor. H. V. de la Costa St., Makati City, Metro Manila.

REGISTRATION FEES PER SESSION: P250 (balcony), P300 (orcnesira) and P350 (patron), Early bird discount of 10%, Limited discounted tickets for teachers, gov't. employees (25%) & students (50%)

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Evangelina Dario Artus

Peacefully joined her Creator on February 10, 2002 at the age of 67 at Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.

Her bereaved husband **Manolito**; son **Reggie**; brothers and sisters **Leonardo** (†) and **Luring, Cesar** and **Susan, Norma** and **Bert, Emy, Roger** and **Nora, Danny** and **Vicky, Dette** and **Boy, Monchit** and **Beth, Beth** and **Bebot**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Funeral Service was held at Palm Mortuary, Las Vegas Nevada, USA, last February 17, 2002.

> *"Truly goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever".*
> *- Psalms 23:6*

FORMER GOVERNOR EFREN B. PASCUAL

June 17, 1930 - February 25, 2002

A good man, whose dedication and devotion has left his family and constituents an eternal legacy.

His loving wife, PAG-ASA ESTANISLAO; children Patricia, Rowena, Efren, Jr., Belinda and Megs; sons and daughter-in-law, grandchildren, brothers Paquito (†), Benjamin and Ernesto; and sisters Angeles, Rosario and Ester; relatives and friends request to pray for his peaceful repose.

Necrological service offered by the Municipality of Orani, Bataan at 9:30 a.m., Sunday, 3 March 2002, at the Nuestra Señora Del Rosario Church. Interment will follow at noon.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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Our Beloved

COL. JOVENCIO R. KINTANAR (Ret.)

of PMA Class '51

Died in the Grace of our Lord on February 27, 2002 at the age of 75.

His loving wife **Andy**; children **Chito & Diane, Waling & Sab, George, Jo-An & Charley, Iching & Alex, Bing & Gerry**; grandchildren **Kitkat, Mico, Talya, Coloy, Tasha, Chummy, Pally, CJ, Punky, John, Carlo & Barb, Macky, Ina, Issa, Miguel, Jose, David** and great grandchildren **Nina, Anton** and **Isabella**; other relatives and friends request you to pray for him on his eternal journey with the Lord.

Holy Masses will be offered daily at 7 o'clock in the evening at the St. Ignatius Pro-Cathedral, Camp Aguinaldo.

Interment will be on March 3, 2002 at the Libingan ng mga Bayani at Fort Bonifacio after the 10 o'clock Mass.

MOTORTECH, INC.

mourns the demise of its Chairman and President

OSCAR S. YABUT

November 28, 1942 - February 26, 2002

We join his bereaved family, wife **EVELINDA**; children **JUSTO NARCISO, RONALD & MA. OLIVIA MISA**, and **MARICHELLE**; his grandchildren **MIGUEL OSCAR** and **AARON GABRIEL**, brothers and sister, in-laws, and relatives in their prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Solace II, Arlington Memorial Chapels, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. The Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated on Saturday, March 2, 2002 at 8:00 a.m.

Cremation rites will follow at Loyola Memorial Park-Crematory, Guadalupe, Makati City.

> *"I am the Resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even when he dies, and no one who lives and believes in Me will ever die."*
> John 11:25-26

JULITA Z. MORALES

July 31, 1916 - February 26, 2002

Her sisters **Zita** and **Dolfo, Det**; brothers **Bong & Piling, Kit & Olive, Emil & Baby**; nephews, nieces **Genia, Marita & Danny, Manoling & Málou, Mon & Donna, Susan & Mike, Tony & Silvia, Jun & Kathy, Joy & Henry, Ding & Janet, Luis & Belen, Jojo, Paco, Baby & Russ, Margot & Neel, Koko, Liza & Robert, MM & Annabeck, Mark, Nina, Grace, Mano, Joanna, Aleli & Cito, Larcy & Estan** and grandchildren request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels (De Luxe Chapel), Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Cremation will be at the Manila Memorial Park Crematorium on March 01, 2002 after the 1:00 PM Mass at the Manila Memorial Park-Crematory, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

We Remember Dearly

ERNESTO "GATS" V. SANTOS

July 25, 1917 - February 28, 2001
on his First Death Anniversary

Holy Mass will be offered on February 28, 2002 at 6:00 p.m. at the Mary the Queen Parish Church, Greenhills, San Juan.

"Lord, let eternal light in your heavenly Kingdom shine upon your servant, ***Gats****, a beloved husband and loving father, grandfather and faithful friend."*

We, his family, requests relatives, friends to join us in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

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OUR DEARLY BELOVED

AGUSTIN "JUN" SANCHEZ ALONZO, JR.

Peacefully joined our Lord on February 26, 2002 at the age of 74.

His loving wife **Marietta Fortuno**; children **Mary Anne & Bobby, Dulce & Mike, Jojo & Annette, Alma, Lani & Joey, Kay & Chris, Paul & Tina**; grandchildren, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos Avenue (Sucat Road), Parañaque City.

Funeral Mass shall be on March 3, 2002 at 7:00 a.m. at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels followed by cremation services at 10:00 a.m. at the Manila Memorial Park Crematory, Dr. A. Santos Avenue, Parañaque City.

LINA CASTRO vda. de la PEÑA

of Cagayan de Oro City and Sydney, Australia

Peacefully joined her Creator and loving husband
Pantaleon B. de la Peña
on the 19th day of February 2002 at the age of 84.

Her children and children-in-laws **Edna & Doug, Maria Teresita & Leo, Lourdes Corazon** and **Efren, Pantaleon & Gel** and **Francis**; grandchildren **Edna Dulce, Roderick, Jon Michael, Francis Robert, Carl, Katrina Angela & Francis Karl** request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment will be on March 2, 2002 at Sydney, Australia.

NILDA OLEGARIO FLORES

Wife of the late **Prof.-Engr. Manuel M. Flores**

Died on February 27, 2002 at the age of 87.

Her children **Jimmy & Fe, Manoling** (†), **Benny** (†) & **Luchie** and **Tessie & Jett**; brothers and sisters, grandchildren **Jimbo, Rei, Marty, Gary, Raffy, Nikki, Michael, Monique, Maricar** and **Lia** and great grandchildren **Jack & Isabella**, relatives and friends request the concerned readers to remember her in their prayers.

Her body lies in state at the Hearts of Jesus and Mary Church, Bulletin Street, West Triangle, Quezon City.

Funeral Mass will be on Saturday, March 2, 2002 at 12:30 p.m. Cremation to follow.

Message of Thanks

We, the family
(father **Dr. Hermin Calma**, mother **Celita**, sister **Kate**)
of the late

Jeremias Christopher (Ep-ep) Calma

(1986-2002)

who returned to the Lord on February 21, 2002

wish to express our heartfelt thanks to all who condoled with us, offered prayers and Masses, and supported us during our time of grief. Our special thanks to **Fr. Bill Kreutz, S.J.**, to the doctors and staff of Zamboanga Doctors Hospital who gave their best care and skill to help our beloved **Ep-ep**.

MOTORING

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

Would you let tire negligence spoil your summer drive?

By Tessa R. Salazar

KABLAM! Just one burst, and the fun was over for me.

Flashback: The vehicle I was driving was a few inches away from a 10-wheeler truck on the opposite side when its three-foot-high left rear tire suffered a blowout. The pressure of the air deformed my car's left fender, bent the hood upward and gouged out the left signal light. The year had just started and I was somewhere on a remote highway in Benguet.

A more recent flashback this month: I was driving another vehicle, a 9-year-old L200 pickup in Anilao, Batangas, at around 6 a.m. I was looking forward to a day of sun, sand and snorkeling when the stench of a burning tire assaulted my nostrils. I thought at first it wasn't mine, so I just went on cruising.

Later on, however, I felt the steering began to stiffen. As I turned right on an intersection in Cuenca, a man signaled that my tire was flat. I stopped near a police station and looked. It was 6 a.m. No vulcanizing shop would be open by this time.

That was when I realized that a flat tire, like any accident, exempts no one and chooses no time.

Tire flats, says a tire expert, play a great part in many highway accidents. Tire maintenance should be a serious business of every motorist because poorly maintained tires can send everything that rides on them everywhere.

Tire accidents

The Automobile Tire Defects of the American Jurisprudence, Proof of Facts, says that the injuries to passengers caused by tire accidents are serious to fatal. It quoted the Accident Prevention Division of Allstate Insurance Co. saying that almost 25 percent of fatal accidents on the highways are caused by tire troubles.

Summertime is here, and so are long, out-of-town trips. Sadly, some excited vacationers, me included, are guilty of failing to conduct pretrip inspections on their vehicles. In my case, I was in a hurry at that time. Besides, I thought, the trip would just take two hours from my place. I now denounce that argument.

Checking your tires is included in the easy-to-remember inspection guide every motorist should do before embarking on out-of-town trips. It's called B-L-O-W-B-A-G-A (Battery, Light, Oil, Water, Brake, Air [tire], Gas, and Accessories [tools, flashlights]).

One doesn't have to be a tire expert to realize that tires running on paved roads generally have much longer lives than those running on rough roads. A tire's life—said tire experts—could be prolonged by individual care and attention.

ILLUSTRAIO N: ALBERT RODRIQUEZ

Attention should be paid to the following points to avoid damage, according to the tire technologists of Bridgestone-Firestone.

- The correct inner pressure of your tire.
- The recommended load of your vehicle—which also means no overloading.
- The correct matching of dual tires and the recommended rotations.
- Correct wheel alignment, safe steering.
- Proper use of rims.

Inflation pressure

There's a saying that anything excessive is bad. The same can be true if there's too little of it. How important is maintaining the correct tire pressure? Underinflated tires will damage one's tires as much as overinflated ones. Incorrect tire pressure shortens the normal life of tires.

Underinflated tires could also cause abrasions on the sides, or shoulders, of the tires. Underinflated tires could also cause the steel cords to be cut and separated from the rubber. Dangerous cracks could also result. Due to added friction between tires and road surfaces, rubber and fuel consumption could increase. The tread could "chunk" out from the centrifugal force at speeds in excess of 100 km/h.

Overinflated tires, on the other hand, could cause the vehicle to slip easily because of too little friction between tires and road surface. Rapid abrasion of the tread center could also result.

Air expands when subjected to increasing heat. That's why it is important to check and adjust tire pressures when the tire has not yet run and is still cold. Tire experts say that new tires tend to expand or increase its volume during a certain period. Frequent checking is recommended, ideally every 3,000 km.

Motorists should also watch for air leaks. The valve core should be renewed and any lost valve cap replaced.

The pressure of the spare tire is also often lower than the proper inflation pressure. Do not forget to check the spare's pressure before stacking it safely down there.

The pressure of the tire should also be properly controlled in relation to the vehicle load. The proper inflation pressure of the tire is said to be associated with the particular car model and at the same time the recommended load specified. A constant 20-percent overload decreases the life of the tire to 70 percent while a 40-percent overload decreases the tire's life to 50 percent. Operators and drivers of public utility vehicles should take special note of their loading practices.

Deformation

Excessive deformation of the tire's sidewalls also increases the chance of cutting. Excessive temperatures and stress increase fatigue in the rubber and cords, and weakens adhesion between rubber and cords.

When you're forced to drive an overloaded vehicle, however, go as slow as possible.

Tires should be rotated. Radial tires should be rotated at intervals of approximately every 8,000 km. For bias tires, the rotation should be every 5000 km. Ask your service center or nearest car dealer how a four-tire rotation or a five-tire rotation (including the spare tire) should be properly done.

Helpful hints for safe driving

HAVE a safe out-of-town trip this summer. Remember the following:

- Four-point plan for intersection safety:

—Know the intersection laws first and the route of line.

—Slow down at intersections with your foot over the brake. Most motorists are guilty of placing their foot on the gas instead of the brake.

—Show your intention by vehicle position and signal.

—Go with care and without overcaution. Drivers who are overcautious and who use brakes abruptly are often bumped from behind.

- How to avoid head-on collisions:

—Read the road ahead. See if there's an approaching vehicle. Know if the road is two-way or one-way.

—Right to the right. Especially on two-ways. Slow moving vehicles are on the right. If something's wrong with your vehicle, it is better to stay on the right. That way you can have more room to maneuver.

—If collision is imminent, reduce speed or stop the vehicle to reduce impact.

—If collision is inevitable, hit something soft rather than hard. Hit something fixed rather than moving. If you have to hit something, hit it with "glancing blow" rather than head on.

Psychology also plays a factor. When you're depressed and your mind is preoccupied with things other than your driving, it is suggested that you ask somebody to drive for you. Better yet, leave your vehicle at home and ride with somebody you trust.

You also have three options when faced with a hazard: Brake, steer and tap the horn. Brake so that you can slow down or stop the vehicle. Steer to avoid collision, whether to the left or to the right. Tap your horn to communicate your presence. All of these would require control.

Tessa R. Salazar

The status of hydrogen drive

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

HOW would you like to drive an affordable car that is powered by hydrogen-based fuel cells, not petroleum, and emits only water vapor, not noxious carbon dioxide, from its tailpipe?

Sorry, but you'll have to wait 10 to 20 years for the mass production of such a "clean" car, when hydrogen-fuel-cell technology will have replaced the internal combustion engine. In the car of the future, fuel cells will use stored hydrogen and oxygen from the air to create electricity that will propel the engine. Thus, the only emission is water.

Auto manufacturers worldwide—General Motors, Ford, Daimler-Chrysler, Toyota, Honda and BMW—have invested billions of dollars in alternative energy research, especially fuel-cell research and development. The Big Three US carmakers worked together under the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles, which was begun in 1993 under the Clinton administration, to reduce US dependency on foreign oil by coming up with high-mileage gasoline-fueled affordable cars that could travel 80 miles per gallon of gasoline, or nearly 35 kilometers per liter. The research project received about $1.5 billion in government subsidies during the eight-year presidency of Bill Clinton.

The Big Three produced prototype vehicles that got at least 70 miles per gallon and developed advances in aerodynamics and lighter composite materials that are now used in auto manufacturing, but none came close to commercial production of an 80-miles-a-gallon car.

Meanwhile, high-mileage family sedans fell out of favor as gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks became the craze among Americans, so the average fuel economy of cars and trucks in the United States steadily dropped. This year's fleet gets the worst gas mileage in 21 years, says the US government. Small wonder that, with only 5 percent of the world's population, the United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil, mostly in the form of gasoline.

Toyota and Honda, which had no share in the US program's subsidies, developed hybrid gasoline-electric cars getting 40 miles a gallon. In the United States and Japan, the Japanese carmakers already sell these hybrid cars, which they view as a transition to fuel-cell-based cars that are projected to come into mass production in 10 years. In hybrid technology, Toyota and Honda pushed ahead of the Big Three, which are expected to introduce diesel-electric hybrid vehicles in 2004.

Honda is building a hydrogen charge station prototype in California as part of its fuel-cell R&D on how best to deliver hydrogen to cars. In Europe, BMW was the first carmaker in the world to participate in establishing the world's first public filling station for liquefied hydrogen. The problem of how to get the fuel into cars has to be solved before mass production of fuel-cell cars can start. Most fuel-cell vehicles need cumbersome pressurized hydrogen tanks. Automakers are experimenting with a system for extracting hydrogen from stock fuels such as methanol, gasoline and even sodium borohydride, a solid fuel made from borax.

The development of emission-free hydrogen drive got a boost last January when the Bush administration announced a new program, called Freedom Car, encouraging the development of fuel-cell technology to accelerate the replacement of the internal combustion engine in the United States. Critics, however, noted that the new program would allow Washington and Detroit to focus on vague, long-term goals while evading the more difficult task of improving the mileage of motor vehicles in the short term. Due to Detroit's steady opposition to government-mandated increases in fuel economy, US standards have remained unchanged for more than 10 years at an average 27.5 miles a gallon for cars and 20.7 miles a gallon for SUVs, pickups and minivans.

Experts say that commercial production of fuel-cell cars is 10 to 20 years away because of significant hurdles. There is the need to develop viable and low-cost fuel-cell systems, which now cost far more than internal combustion engines, plus the need to develop an entire infrastructure to support hydrogen cars, including an extensive network of service stations for refueling. *(With reports from Washington Post Service, New York Times Service and IHT)*

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: If you can't convince them, confuse them.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

HI-LANDER CROSSWIND

High performance at high altitudes

By Tessa R. Salazar

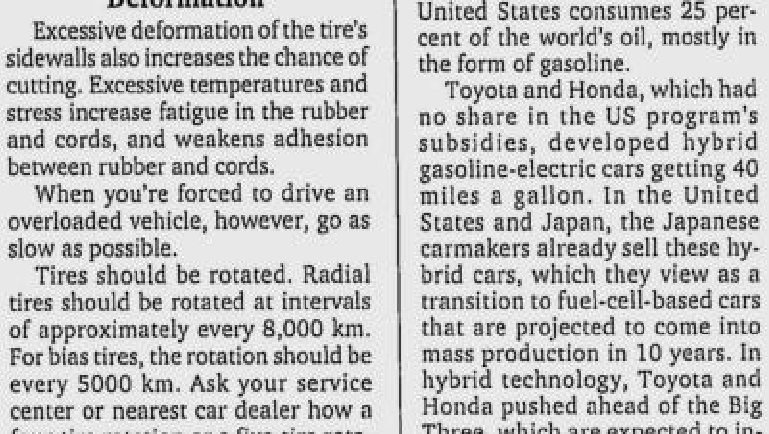
IT'S up to the task on rugged mountains, but a bit lazy on city streets.

At least, that's how it felt for me when I drove the Crosswind all the way to Sagada in Mountain Province.

The Crosswind isn't a breeze on city drives as most gasoline-powered vehicles are. It didn't zoom me in and out like a bullet on stop and go traffic. But, I guess, you don't expect that from a sedan-looking AUV, a class which touts itself more of a "people-carrier" with sporty looks. What surprised me, though, was the way it attacked the steep, rugged roads of Sagada.

Jampacked with seven warm bodies, a lot of baggage at the back and with the air-con in full blast at noon, the Crosswind took it all astride, with extra power to spare.

The Crosswind, a sleeker offshoot of the Isuzu Hi-Lander, boasts of a turbo charger with pressurized air boosting the engine's power, especially in high altitudes. The engine's output is enhanced and emissions are said to have improved. The Crosswind's automatic diesel transmission claims to have the power and responsiveness of a gasoline engine, while maintaining the fuel efficiency of a diesel engine.



A SLEEKER offshoot of the Hi-Lander

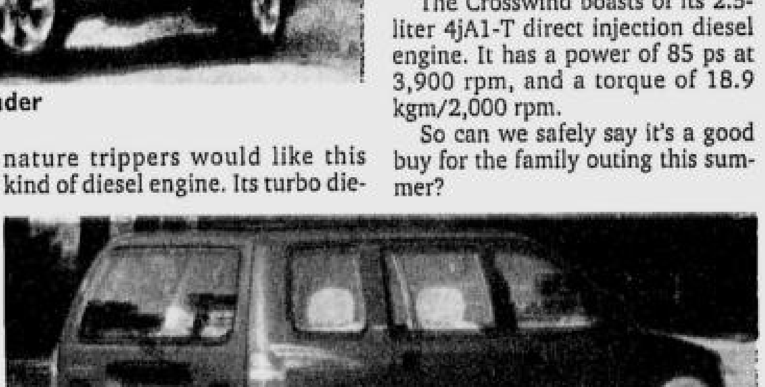
Major plus points

I stepped on the pedals more even as the path got more rocky and rugged, and still my passengers didn't complain of aching butts. They were still comfortably dozing off, major plus points for the Crosswind's impressive suspension system.

Isuzu believes nature lovers and nature trippers would like this kind of diesel engine. Its turbo diesel engine is said to produce the least emissions, even compared to both gasoline engines and indirect injection diesel engines. Engineers say that direct injection diesel engines are more thermally efficient and use less fuel, thus they actually emit fewer pollutants to the environment. That means less guilt while nature tripping on wheels.

The Crosswind boasts of its 2.5-liter 4jA1-T direct injection diesel engine. It has a power of 85 ps at 3,900 rpm, and a torque of 18.9 kgm/2,000 rpm.

So can we safely say it's a good buy for the family outing this summer?



A GOOD buy for the family outing this summer?

VINTAGE CAR SHOW

Outback Restaurant recently sponsored a unique gathering of vintage cars at its Libis branch parking lot. Dubbed "Flare," the fund-raising was organized by the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants and was attended by hundreds of car enthusiasts who had an engaging time viewing the numerous vintage as well as sports cars on exhibit. Shown, from left, are Outback restaurant MIT Therese Reyes and managing partner Norman Zamora with vintage car owners Dr. Vidi Lim, Totti and Boy de Leon. The affair was highlighted by the awarding of prizes to the owners of the best cars.

FORD Lynx 1.6-liter Ghia

Lynx Ghia at zero interest

GET your new Ford Lynx 1.6-liter Ghia with a low down payment of P150,000 and pay the rest in 24 months at zero interest. Special deals also await cash buyers. The Ford Lynx Ghia automatic is currently priced at P765,000 while the manual transmission is pegged at P730,000.

Safety and convenience features include dual airbags, ABS, Ford First Aid Kit, power amenities, fog lamps and color keyed power mirror fold-in system and a remote keyless entry and alarm system. A 12-disc CD changer is also a standard feature on Ghia models.

The exclusive Lynx Ghia offer runs until March 30.

Windshield repair cheaper than replacement

ENGINEERS call this temperature stress "thermal shock," and if you have a small ding in your windshield, thermal shock can cause your minor ding to turn into a major crack.

Repairing a small ding costs as little as P1,800. Replacing an original laminated windshield can cost P12,000 to P50,000. On some cars, the cost may be even higher.

"Once a ding or star (star-shaped with points spreading out) expands, windshield replacement is often the only option," says Andy Tabios, president and general manager of Manila Midwest Glass Crack Repair Corp.

"If the damage is reported and repaired quickly, the windshield is saved," Tabios tells his customers.

Says Tabios: "It is important to perform the repair before dirt infiltrates into the break or before hazardous chemicals penetrate into the lamination. If you can't get to a Manila Midwest Glass Crack Repair Shop right away, at least pass by and get a free windshield saver patch. These patches cover the break until the windshield can be repaired and do not obscure your vision."

Manila Midwest, operating more than seven years in the country and with thousands of satisfied customers under its belt, follows a repair-only philosophy. It does not replace windshield, thus, no conflict of interest.

Manila Midwest offers crack repairs of up to 24" in length. Windshield scratch, if not removed, causes blurry vision due to incoming headlights at nighttime.

Manila Midwest operates in key cities nationwide. For inquiries, call 926-6829 or 851-0062.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chinese motorbikes invading RP market

By Charles E. Buban

ANOTHER Chinese brand is making headway in the Philippine motorcycle market. Chun Lung Fortune Corp. and its Chinese partners have affirmed their support to the Philippines as they set to introduce into the country some 30 models of motorcycles under the brand Sukida.

During Sukida's product launch held recently at its Makati showroom, Chun Lung Fortune Corp. general manager Rosita Lao revealed that they will be offering a complete line of motorcycles ranging from scooters, tricycle, dirt bikes, big bikes to cruiser models powered by 100 cc to 250 cc engines. The company will also be introducing a model of All Terrain Vehicles.

International recognition

Said Lao: "In a span of three years, Sukida has developed more than 30 models that we regularly update every few months. Our brand has been recognized internationally and in fact, we were awarded an ISO 9002 Quality System certification in December 1999 and a Quality Certification for Motorcycle Product Export."

The Hong Kong-based Sukida motorcycle brand is exported in Southeast Asia, the United States, the Middle East and Africa. This will be the first time the brand will be exported in the Philippines.

Confident in RP market

Chun Lung Fortune Corp. intends to challenge the country's motorcycle market long-dominated by Japanese manufacturers. "We are confident we can compete head to head with the others. Our company wants to contribute in the country's macroeconomic growth and develop the country's motorcycle industry," said Lao.

Established in 1987, the Sukida brand is manufactured by Guangzhou Panyu Haojian Motorcycle Industry Co. Ltd. It is the same company that manufactures and supplies Indonesia's best selling Garuda motorcycle.

Support

Lao revealed that Sukida motorcycles will be backed by an after-sales support team, spare parts supply and service and will be working closely with its local dealers to ensure both dealers and consumers are getting the best service from our brand.

"In China, motorcycles are everywhere, and one of the things that made their presence interesting is that motorcycles are not toys or discretionary purchases, the Chinese use them every day, rain or shine, so it is only logical that we come out with a dependable unit of motorcycle," said Lao.

Dealership and sales for Sukida motorcycle lines are set to commence during the first quarter of this year.

SUKIDA SK250-2

FAST FACTS

Engine type	2-cylinder air-cooled 4-stroke
Max. power	7.8 kW/8,500 r/min
Max. speed	100 kph
Brake	Dish/Drum
Starter	Electric and kick-starter
Clutch	Moist
Tires	(Front) 3.00-18 (Rear) 130/90-15
Dimension (LxWxH)	2,215 mm x 780 mm x 1.140 mm

Toyota introduces Revo VX200 to local mart

TOYOTA Motor Philippines Corp. announces the launch of the new Revo VX200, the newest variant in the Revo model line. The VX200 was created to offer an alternative lifestyle for the growing AUV market. It offers the latest features that will suit the sports and luxurious pace of the weekend driver.

The new Revo VX200 marked another evolution from a dependable multipurpose vehicle to an ultramodern utility vehicle with an array of exciting new features.

New features

It makes its presence felt with its new striking chrome grille design and a robust extended front bumper. A set of large crystallized multireflector halogen headlamps and fog lamps complements its sharp look aside from ensuring safe driving even in severe driving conditions. A pair of sporty roof rails, together with over fenders and side cladding as well as new stylish body side stripes further enhance its handsomely designed bodyline.

The VX200 sports an overrider that distinguishes its character and gives it a more massive impression.

Amenities

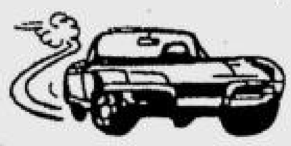
The inside of the new Revo VX200 is equipped with state-of-the art amenities that are bound to pamper its passengers. The first thing one would notice about the new VX200 is its opulent interior endowed with tasteful 2-tone leather seats and door trims adding a luxurious feel to every travel. The cockpit area is ergonomically designed for efficient and effortless drive with vital controls and switches placed within easy reach of the driver for a safer and more relaxing drive. The VX200 has also been equipped with a luxurious leather wrapped 3-spoke steering wheel, wood grain trim and a soft lower dashboard panel cover, further enhanced by its overall two tone motif.

The VX200 is available in a smooth shifting 4-speed automatic transmission, which comes with an electronically controlled transmission (ECT) and in a 5-speed manual transmission edition.

THE NEW Revo VX200

DOTC answers; Toyota's much-awaited F1 debut

FULL TANK



Al Mendoza

I AM flattered that Mike Cuyno, spokesperson of the Department of Transportation and Communications, has reacted to my column (printed in the INQUIRER's Letters section on Monday) about the delay of issuing plates and certificates of registration of newly bought vehicles. He made promises to help remedy the situation.

Good enough?

"No," said Quintin Balajadia, my legman. "He should have listed down remedies, not promises."

But at least there was a reaction, coming yet from the mother agency of the Land Transportation Office.

But how about the LTO?

Deaf as a trunk of a tree. Gen. Roberto Lastimoso seems callous to people's complaints. The LTO chief has yet to say a word on the snail-like pace regarding the release of vehicle plates and certificates of registration.

What gives?

* * *

The Formula One season roars off on Sunday in Melbourne and, for the first time ever, giant carmaker Toyota will take part in the world's No. 1 motor sport.

Panasonic Toyota Racing has unwrapped recently the TMG Toyota TF 102 in a well-attended public ceremony in Cologne, Germany.

Toyota has enlisted Mika Salo and Allan McAnish as the drivers of the TF 102, which will make its F1 debut on March 3.

The TF 102 is a successor to Toyota Team's test car, TF 101, and comes with a brand-new livery.

The racing car has retained Toyota's corporate colors of red and white. It will carry the logos of newly acquired partners AOL Time Warner and Wella.

"We are excited at finally seeing our own racing car compete in the Formula One," said Toyota Philippines' Ariel de Jesus.

* * *

Panasonic Toyota Racing is one of only two to produce its own chassis and engine under one roof, and is the first new entrant to do so since 1979. It is also the first Japanese manufacturer to compete in its own right since 1968.

What's unique about Toyota's Formula One car is that over 30 countries are represented among the 550 employees at the team's base in Cologne, making Toyota truly a "United Nations" Formula One entry.

Said Tsutomu Tomita, chair of Toyota Motorsports and managing director of Toyota Motor Corp. in Japan: "We are extremely pleased to make Toyota's first ever race car. Though we have only just climbed over one of many hurdles we will face during our F1 challenge, we want to share the joy and excitement of the competition of the car with all of our partners and Toyota members. We are committed to challenging in F1 with determination. Through our endeavor, we wish to convey the excitement of Formula 1 races to the fans around the globe."

Caltex has introduced me to the thrill of watching Formula 1 action live a while back. Then Honda made me as joyful a kid when Arnel Doria and Tin Tin Reyes brought me at "ringside" of Kuala Lumpur's state-of-the-art Sepang Circuit last year. Wow, that was quite a trip. I won some ringgits betting on Honda's drivers.

With Toyota, I'll start to keep watch on Salo and McAnish. I had shaken hands with them last year and I found them to be real gentlemen.

Good luck, fellas.

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Motor needs require value for money

THE CURRENT crises only impose the need for smart and economical ways of choosing the right products for our vehicles. Every accessory or motor need now has one essential requirement: value for money. It's better to buy quality products that guarantee efficiency than cheap knockoffs that would only cause you problems and worry whenever you're on the road.

Adhering to the call of the times, Prestone Brake Fluid, the country's most popular brand in terms of quality, performance and usage, maintains its quality formulation that provides superior performance in high temperature brake systems found in today's automobiles and trucks. It is the brand trusted by motorists all over the world because of its reputation for exceeding DOT3 specifications.

Prestone Brake Fluid is designed to absorb moisture and remove water to prevent internal rusting and corrosion. It also substantially reduces the possibility of fluid vaporization and eventual brake failure (as a result of vapor lock) by maintaining a high wet boiling point, Prestone Super Heavy Duty Brake Fluid has a minimum wet boiling point of 284°F or 140°C. Without protection against boiling and extreme heat from friction in the braking system, serious brake problems are possible. This means that your brake fluid has to work all the time, with every step of the pedal.

Prestone Brake Fluid is recommended for all ABS, hydraulic drum and disc braking systems as well as hydraulic clutches requiring DOT3 fluids. Prestone Super Heavy Duty Brake Fluid gives an extra margin of safety and is designed for safe operation of today's modern high-powered vehicles. Its DOT3 motor vehicle brake fluid meets or exceeds Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 116 and meets SAE Spec J1703.

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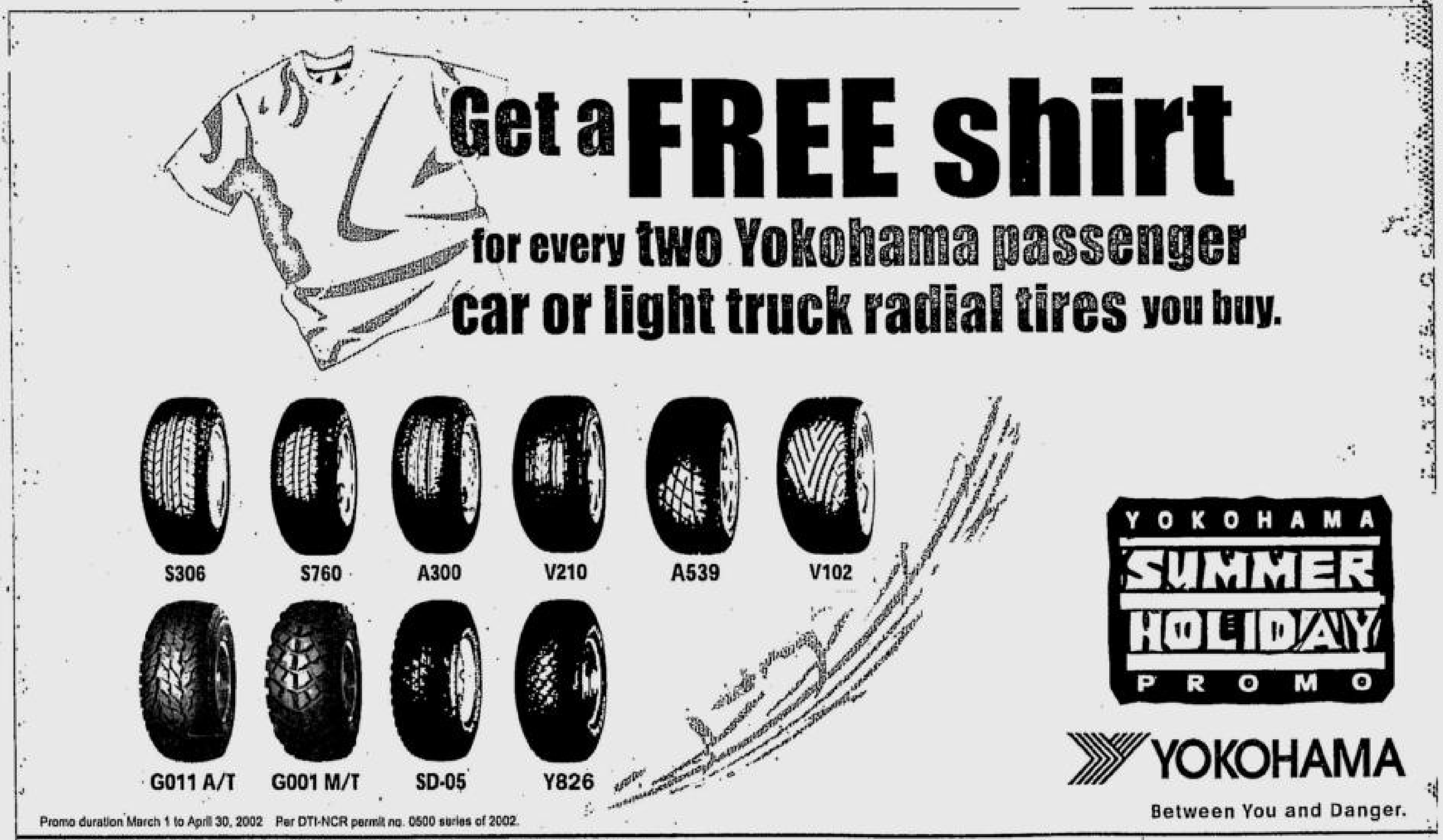

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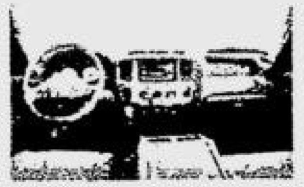

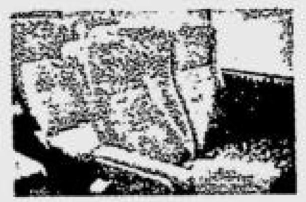

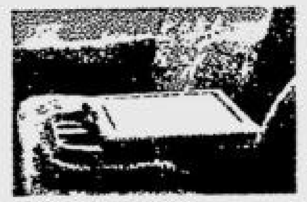

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LIFESTYLE

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

ILLUSTRATIONS: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Is it a big sacrifice to be a vegetarian?

If you want nothing but veggies, you can survive in this meat-lovers' haven if you know how to cook or where to eat—and it doesn't have to happen only during Lent

By Jon-jon Rufino
Contributor

FOR DINNER, I'm going to pull the stalks off fresh mushrooms, then mince and sauté them with onions. When the onions release their aroma and the mushrooms brown, I'll add parsley and bread crumbs. Then I'll stuff the mixture back into the fresh mushrooms, dab a little pesto and top off each piece with a slice of mozzarella. That goes into the oven while I prepare my risotto Milanese, rice with saffron cooked with only increments of water at a time so that the cream of each grain comes out. I'll grill a few vegetables, maybe zucchini, leeks, broccoli and bell peppers, and top that off with aged balsamic vinegar. For dessert, I'll bake some apples stuffed with feta cheese, topped with preserve, either raspberry or blueberry.

Think being vegetarian is a big sacrifice? It can be, but not if you know how to cook, or where to eat.

Compared to other Southeast Asian countries, it is harder to find a veggie meal over here. Indonesians have their Gado-gado, which Café by the Ruins in Baguio makes very well, while the Chinese, Thais and Indians have enough practicing Buddhists to make sure that you can get a meal anywhere that does not involve killing an animal. But here, we'll find any excuse to fry something in pork fat, or mix in a little *bagoong*. I remember several trips to Vigan, Legaspi, Anilao, and even here in Manila where I've had to do with just rice and soy sauce until I get my hands on fresh fruits. But the ingredients are all here, and if you know how to prepare them, you can make a feast. If you need to eat out all the time, you'll survive, but you better have a lot of patience for just salads, spaghetti with canned tomato sauce and French fries.

Choices

But there are a few choices out there. My favorite lunch place is the New Bombay Canteen on De la Costa Street and Buendia Avenue in Makati. Food there is reasonably priced; a meal for four might not exceed P600 if there are no gluttons in the group. As far as pizzas go, I enjoy the vegetarian preparations of Little Caesars, Dominos and especially Magoos, which has nothing fancy in it, but manages to make all the flavors mix in well. There is always a good noodle dish in a Chinese or Thai restaurant; I'm rather happy with Mey Lin in Glorietta and People's Palace in Malate.

Ordering Thai curry can be a bit difficult though, because most places use a prepared paste that already has *patis* and *bagoong* mixed in. Same thing goes for the signature Thai dish, Tom Yum, the hot and sour soup with lemongrass.

The clear solution is to learn how to make these things yourself. Just substitute *miso* for shrimp paste and soy sauce for fish sauce, and you'll get roughly the same flavor, although a certain food columnist from this publication adds chicken broth mix and *patis* when he comes to my kitchen and finds that I'm not looking. But are you going to trust the taste of someone that enjoys snacking on whole slabs of butter alone, with or without the bread?

I'd like to address two myths about vegetarians that I've had to deal with throughout the eight years that I've chosen to eat "rabbit food," as my mother calls my diet.

The first is that we can sense any bit of ani-

IS/ p.C2

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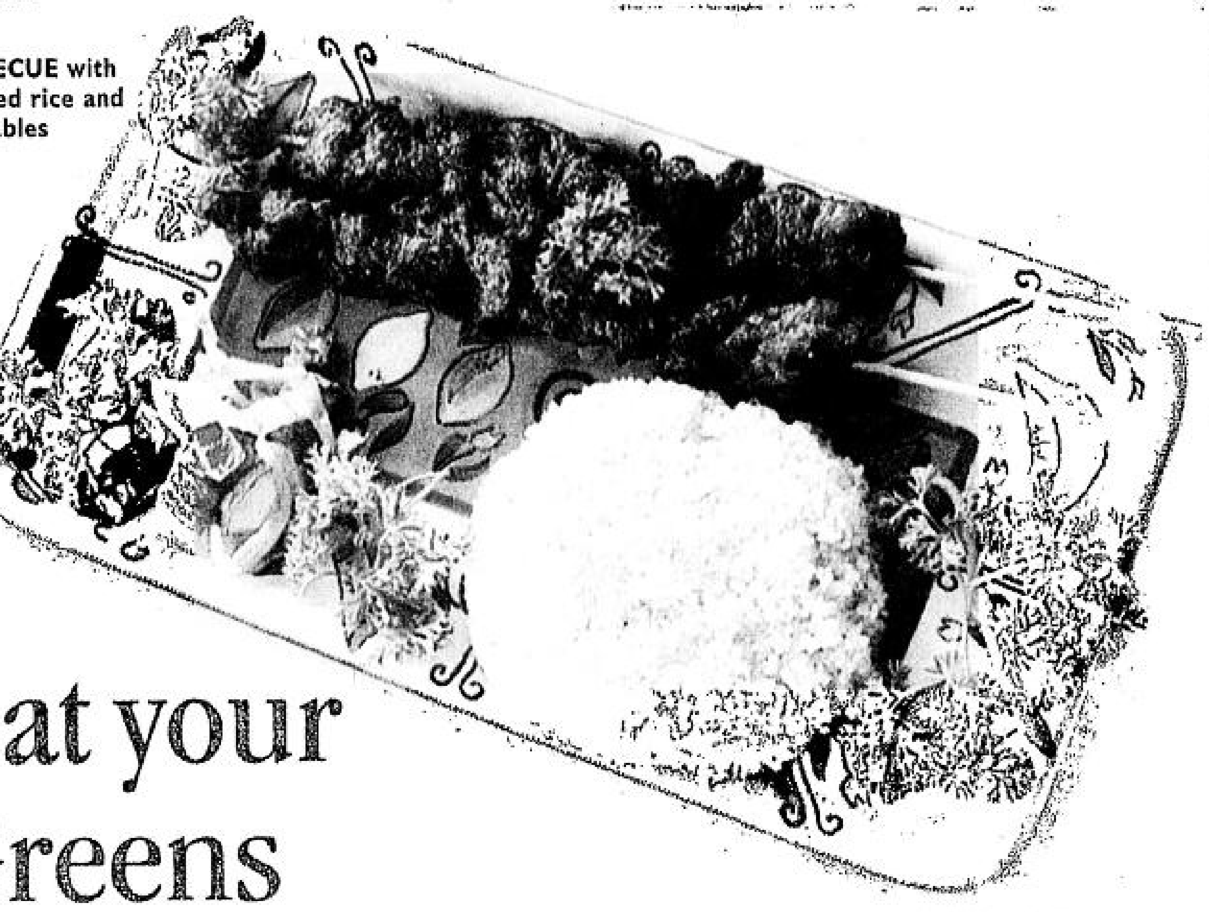
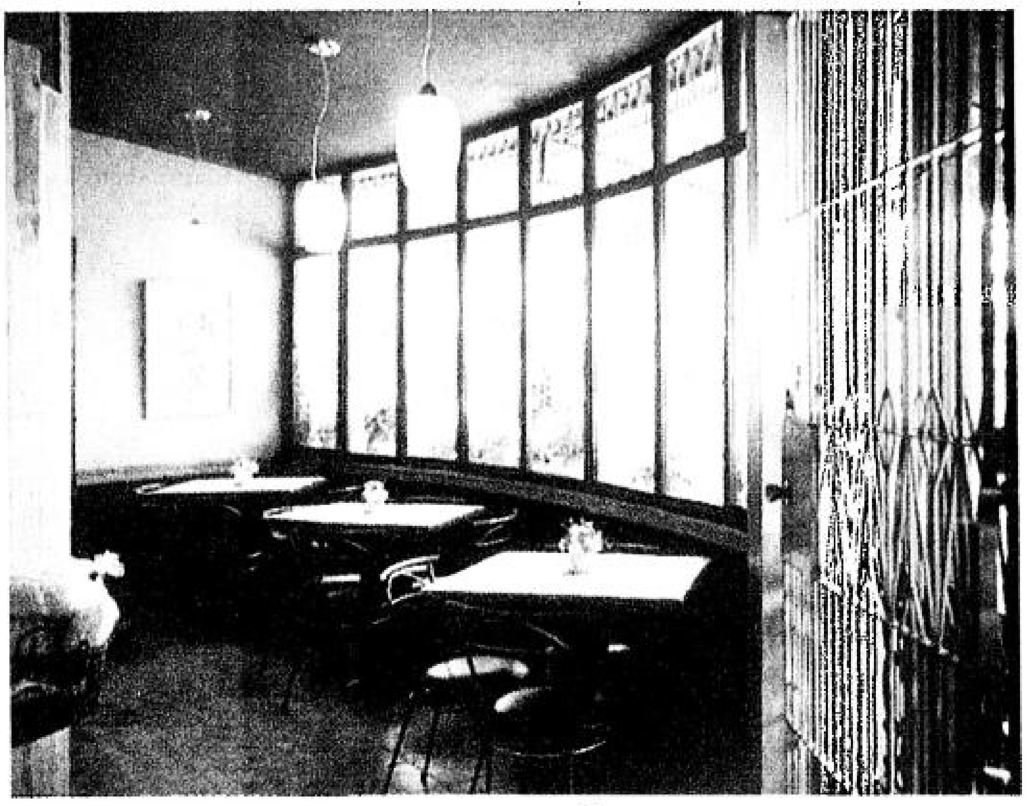

BARBECUE with steamed rice and vegetables


GREEN and soothing interiors

Eat your Greens

From page C8

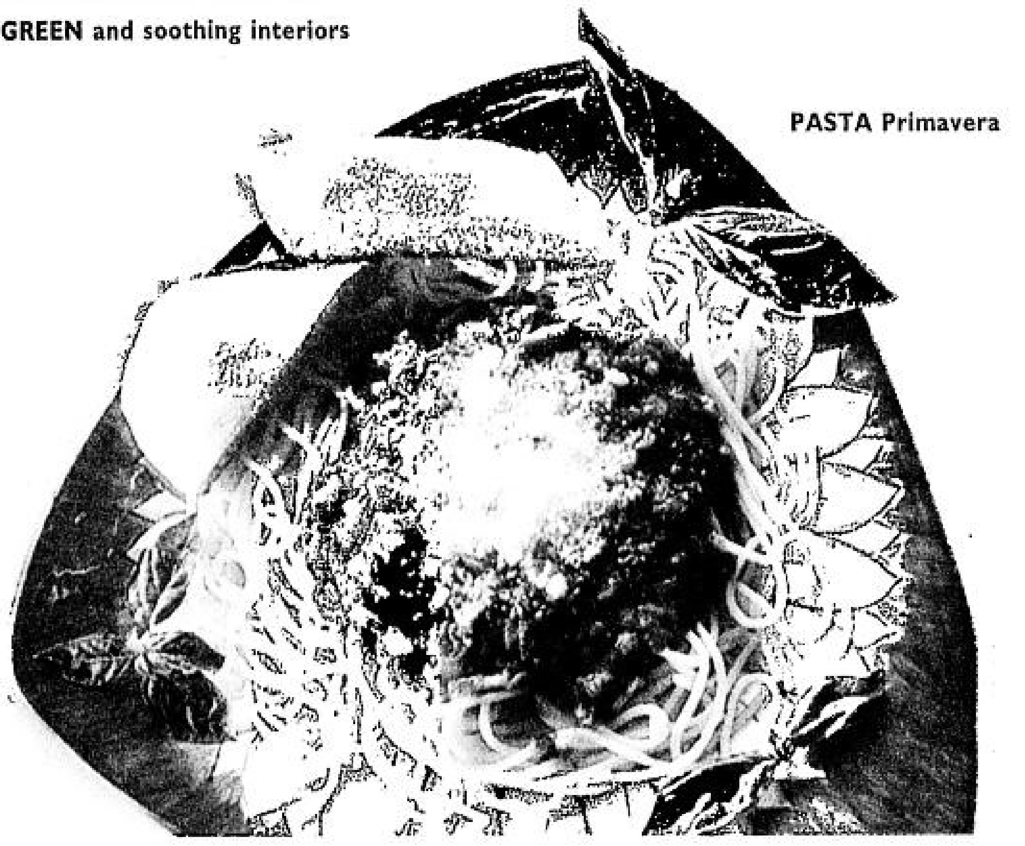
spices in whole wheat, served with fries. Pasta eaters will enjoy the Pasta Primavera (P120), which is spaghetti in tomato sauce with mushrooms, olives, capers, leeks, celery, bell peppers and spices. For dessert, one can partake of the non-dairy chocolate cake (P60/slice) or the eggless carrot cake (P60/slice). There is a whole choice of tea (P35/cup) and coffee. A personal favorite is the freshly squeezed *dalandan* juice (P40).

Mary Ann says that though there is a fixed menu, they can customize dishes according to requirements as long as they are told ahead of time. "Some vegetarians don't like onions, or garlic or mushrooms. Others don't want oil or dairy. We can adjust, just give us prior notice," she says.

Delicious and healthy food served amid soothing surroundings—tofu everyone?

E-mail the author at cbguballa@inquirer.com.ph

GREEN GOURMETS. Wally and Mary Ann Duran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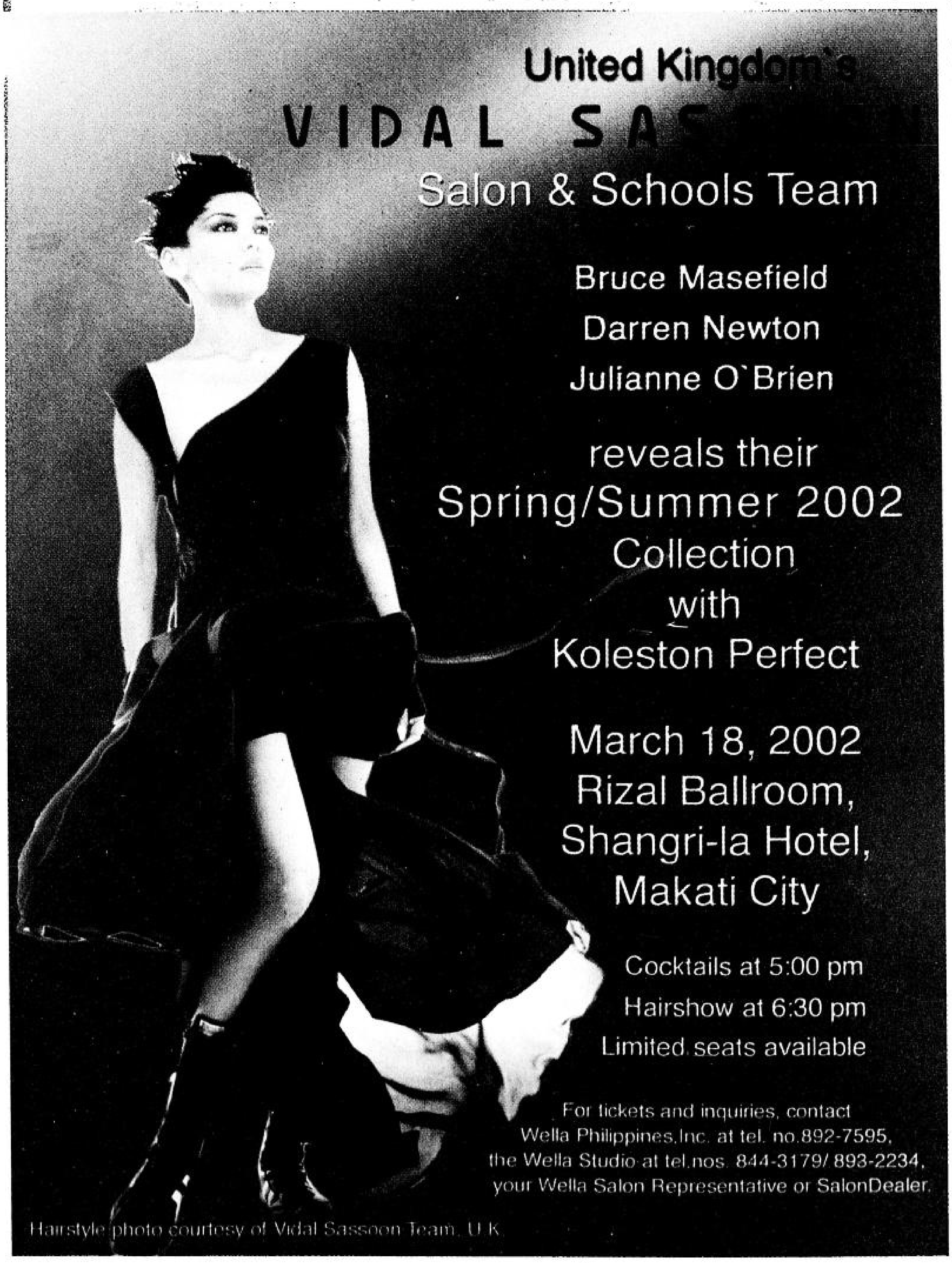
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Is it a big sacrifice to be a vegetarian?

From page C1

mal product added to our food, and that if we do take some, we'll react violently and perhaps erupt in boils. I've probably had some dishes prepared with a little beef, chicken or fish broth, but because of the overpowering flavor or some spice, or of cheese, I did not notice. And I'm certain that once in a while I have been duped into eating some *lumpia* that was promised to be vegetarian, only to have indistinguishable bits of shrimp or chicken put in. In none of these cases did some spider sense go off in me. I might have had mild bowel problems the next day, but nothing to call the hospital over, or even to take medicine for. I did not feel as Gandhi did after trying a bit of mutton in London, as if there was a live goat going wild in his stomach. But maybe it is different for someone who turned vegetarian at 19 like myself than for someone born and raised in a vegetarian culture.

The second myth is that vegetarians tend to be emaciated people with no energy and falling hair. We get all the protein we need from our vegetables. Think of a cow, the foremost source of protein in our minds. All they eat is grass. We do not need to have tofu or beans in every meal we have. Put another way, Dr. Sanirose Orbeta, the nutritionist, told me that a bowl of pasta, without the sauce, has as much protein as a six-ounce steak.

I recall having sat near a former conspiracy theory columnist from Today (the newspaper) who declared with all authority that he tried being vegetarian once, but had to stop because he didn't have enough energy to go on with his daily routine. I'd love to meet all these people who "tried" to be vegetarian but were too enervated in the middle of Mt. Pulag's mossy forest, or in the University of Life track, and see who has more energy.

Purification

Anyway, back to eating, I'd like to think that being vegetarian purifies one's taste buds. If you're the type of person that adds salt automatically to any dish served to you, that puts on an extra dousing of Parmesan cheese on pasta, and enjoys everything swimming in butter or cream, then being vegetarian will not suit you. It's similar to the eating philosophy in that book that says that one should eat according to one's

blood type. Although that particular book said that with my blood type I should be eating a rare steak every day, I do subscribe to the theory that some people have more potential to be vegetarian should they choose. So if you enjoy feeling the texture of alfalfa as much as tasting it, if you like way the grains of a mustard rub against your tongue, if you look forward to the way that a cherry tomato explodes in your mouth, then you might discover a world of subtler tastes and experiences as a vegetarian.

And what really completes the eating experience is learning how to cook. I was forced into it because I could not find enjoyable meals in my parent's house once I turned vegetarian. Vegetables basted in butter doesn't seem to be much healthier than a fried chicken dish that stains the plate with as much oil. I started off with simple recipes from cookbooks and friends, and built up the repertoire as I became more comfortable using certain ingredients. In addition to knowing that you can always prepare a satisfying meal for yourself at home, you appreciate more the hard work that goes into certain dishes in restaurants. And you develop scorn for those places that try to make food taste good by super-seasoning a dish with Aji-nomoto or topping it with tons of burned garlic. Nothing wrong with garlic, but it releases the most flavor when it is still a little juicy.

If you want to turn vegetarian for some environmental, moral, or religious reason, as for those who want to give up paying for slaughtered animals for Lent, you should know that it is possible to make the sacrifice in this country if you want to. You should also know that it doesn't have to be much of a sacrifice.

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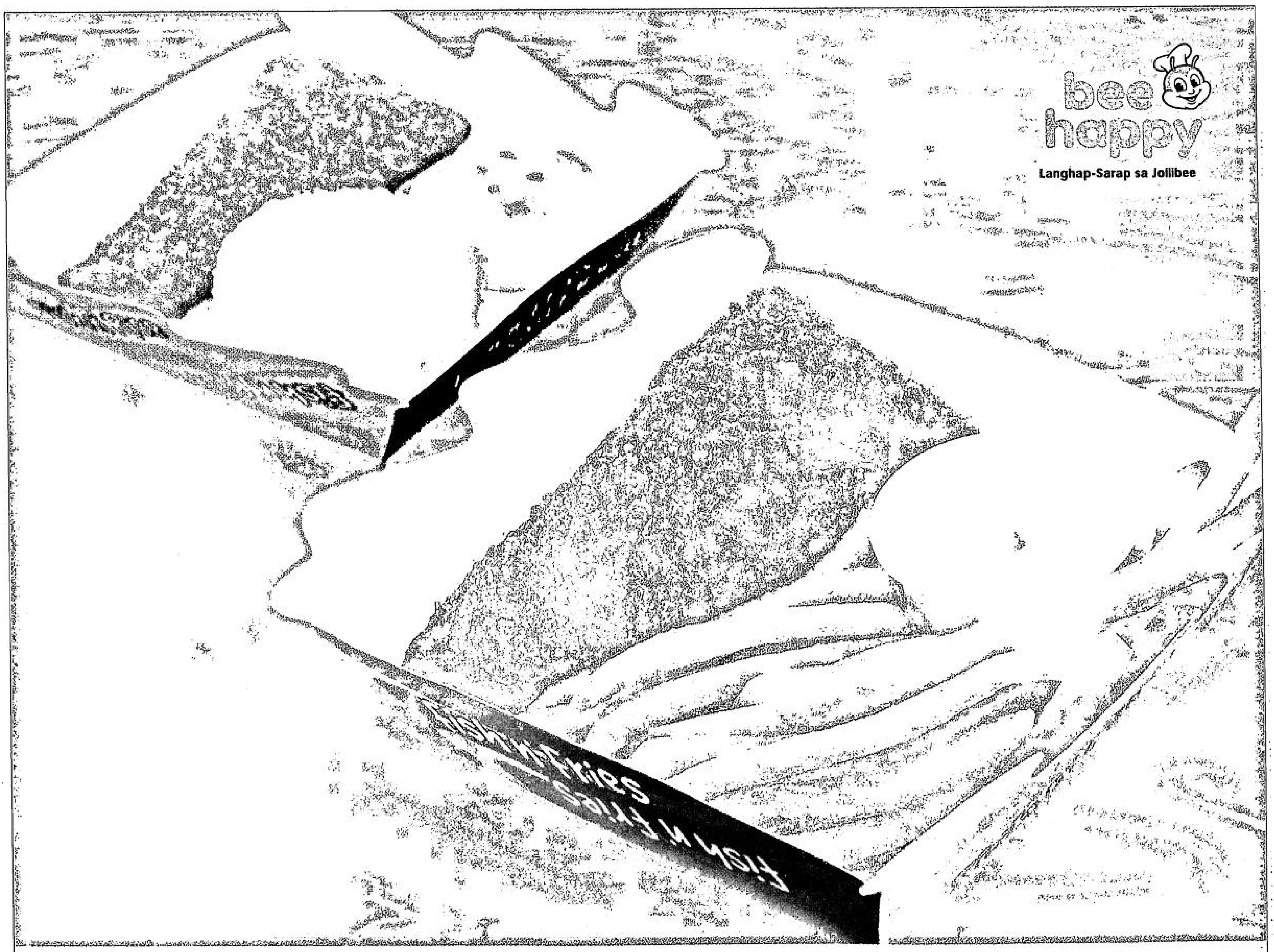
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DINING OUT

T.G.I. FRIDAY'S introduces four all-time Filipino favorites served in the restaurant's signature king-size portions: Grilled Pampano served with the restaurant's own mango salsa and native *ensalada*; Gambas, shrimps on a bed of onions, carrots and green bell peppers and served with steamed white rice; and its versions of Inihaw na Liempo and Chicken Barbecue, both marinated in garlic and sweet soy sauce and served with Java rice, and Friday's homemade vinegar and garlic sauce. Friday's Fiesta Platter is a heaping sampler of these appetizing choices served with Friday's homemade sauces, mango salsa and refillable Java Rice. "Friday's Fiesta" is available at T.G.I. Friday's at Glorietta, Ortigas, Malate, Quezon City, Alabang and Sta. Lucia East.

SAISAKI Aseana. Yasai Tomoe Maki

SBARRO offers Broccoli, Spinach and Tomato Pizza every Thursday, and Primavera Pizza on Fridays. Other pizza specials available each day of the week are Vegetable Pizza on Mondays; Ham, Pineapple and Pepperoni Pizza on Tuesdays; and Chicken and Vegetable Pizza on Wednesdays. Also available are your all-time favorite pizzas and foccacias. Sbarro branches are at SM City North Edsa, SM Megamall, Robinsons Place Manila, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center and Festival Supermall, Alabang.

ALBA RESTAURANTE ESPAÑOL will open its second restaurant on Tomas Morato, QC on March 2. The new branch offers the same traditional Spanish cooking culled from the recipes of the dean of Spanish cuisine himself, Don Anastacio de Alba. Dishes are prepared with meticulous care and excellent ingredients that are trademarks of Alba. This selection includes Paella Valenciana, Paella Negra and Paella Marinara, the Bacalao À La Vizcaina, Lengua Sevillana, Cochinillo and Don Alba's signature *tapas*.

HYATT REGENCY MANILA'S Café Al Fresco presents "Flavors of Spain," a food festival that features the finest of this fabulous Mediterranean culture until March 17. Guest Chef Luis Martinez of Hyatt Regency La Manga ensures authentic cuisine, bringing in the freshest ingredients flown in from Spain. Café Al Fresco evokes a fiesta ambiance, with buffets that include an extensive selection from the highly popular *tapas*, *paella* and rice dishes to novelties like *pechuga de pato con salsa de moscatel y uvas, rabo de toro estofado con salsa de vino tinto*, grilled monkfish on a Spanish ratatouille and poached hake in saffron sauce. "Flavors of Spain" is featured on buffets for lunch and dinner at Café Al Fresco. As an added attraction, patrons have the chance to win a three-night complimentary accommodation at Hyatt Regency La Manga (Murcia) and Hyatt Hotel Villa Magna (Madrid) in a special raffle.

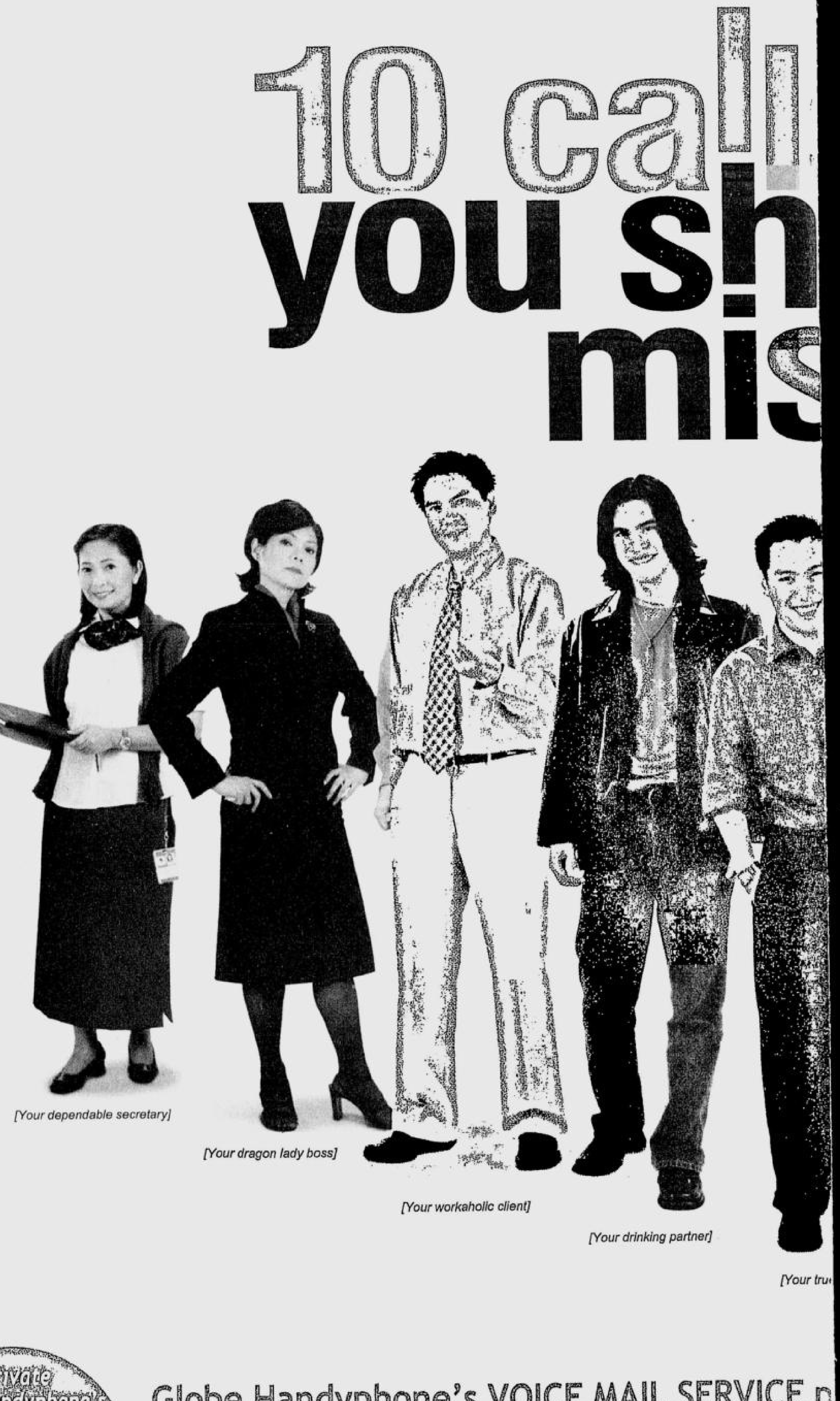
HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL MANILA presents lunch and dinner buffets of Sri Lankan dishes from March 1-15 at the Café Jeepney. Guest chefs Dahanayake Dharmapriya and Kurugamage Perera from the Hilton JAIC Tower in Colombo are whipping up Chilled Spicy Yogurt Soup, Curried Lentil, Stuffed Capsicums, Biriyani Rice, Cabbage and Dhal White Curry, Beef Polkiri Badun, Pork Chutti Roast, Cuttlefish Moju, Fish Ambul Thiyal, Prawn and Tomato Curry and Fish Tel Vinakiri. Call 819-0645.

MANILA MIDTOWN HOTEL'S Vogue Coffeeshop offers a buffet spread prepared by Executive Chef Stefan Farkas in a two-week International Food Festival until March 10. It features Stir-Fried Pork Vegetable Julienne, Grilled Fish Fillet with Okra Wasabi Sauce, and Chicken-Goulash Adobo. Call 526-7001 local 6554.

BURGOO American Bar and Restaurant has launched "Four Great Supreme Choices." The selection includes Supreme Blackened Salmon (pan-seared Norwegian salmon with a mixture of paprika and freshly cracked peppercorns), New York Steak Supreme (quality steak, grilled to order, served with mashed potatoes and organic garden fresh salad), Supreme Prawns Thermidor (three-piece black, tiger prawns, served with special sauce) and Chicken Steak Supreme (three-piece boneless chicken, grilled to order and topped with lemon and caper salsa). Available until April, the "Four Great Supreme Choices Part 2" will also mark the opening of Burgoo's third and newest outlet at 2/L Podium, ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City. Burgoo also has branches at 310 Tomas Morato Extension, South Triangle, QC and at 3/L Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City. Call 927-7424.

SAISAKI'S Buffet Cookfest now gives you the best price off ever. It's Saisaki's "Group of 7 Pay for 6 Price Off." This eat-all-you-can feast features Yasai Tomoe Maki (mixed vegetables, tuna pickled radish and cucumber oil), Kake Age Tempura Sushi (deep-fried prawns in sushi rice), Kani Tempura Sushi (deep-fried crabstick in sushi rice), Nasu Mabo Chili Tofu (eggplant with spicy ground pork and beancurd), Tofu Ika Sarada (squid with beancurd salad, vegetables and aromatic *miso* dressing). The cookfest also includes tempura, sushi, sashimi, maki-temaki, *agemono*, *yakimono* teppanyaki, grilled barbecue, *nimono* and noodles. Visit any of Saisaki branches at SM Megamall, Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center, Pasay Road, Padre Faura, Edsa and West Avenue.

RED CRAB SEAFOOD AND STEAKS RESTAURANT opened its fourth branch in Alabang recently. Located at 2/F Corte de Las Palmas, Alabang Town Center, Red Crab is known for its gourmet crab, seafood and steak specialties. Red Crab popularized more than a dozen ways of cooking crabs. There's the Szechuan crab, which is garnished with onions, Szechuan chili sauce mixed with oyster sauce, olive oil, ginger and garlic. Try Crab Maritess cooked in olive oil, white wine, chili peppers and garlic; Crab Lilian, sautéed in coconut milk marinade and served with cayenne pepper; Thai Chili, cooked in red curry paste, coconut milk, special herbs and vegetables; Singaporean Chili Crab, cooked in Malay style and served with vegetables. The restaurant also offers Raymund's Spicy Salt and Pepper Crab.



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At Inner Source, vegetarianism becomes an attractive dietary option when connected to healthy and stress-free living

Light is right

By Rowena C. Burgos

Photos by Romy Homillada

WHAT should you eat to stay fit? Vegetables, vegetables and more vegetables. And that's not just your mother nagging you, either. Scientific studies confirm the compounds found in vegetables can help ward off cancer, heart disease and other ailments.

Combined with fruits and grains in a low-fat diet, vegetables may be more important for overall health than we ever could have imagined.

But is this really news? More than 2,000 years ago, a story in the Old Testament book of Daniel confirmed the value of a vegetable diet.

When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia captured Jerusalem, he ordered his highest palace official to recruit young men who were healthy, wise, educated and fit to serve in the royal palace. "Teach them how to speak and write our language and give them the same food and wine that I am served. Train them for three years, and then they can become court officials," the king said to the officer.

One of the four young Jews chosen was Daniel, who ate and drank only what God had approved for his people to eat. And he asked the king's chief official for permission not to eat the food and wine served in the royal palace.

For the next 10 days, Daniel and his friends consumed only vegetables and water at mealtime. Ten days later, they looked healthier and better than the young men who had been served food from the royal palace. After this, their guard let them eat vegetables instead of the rich food and wine.

If you, too, would like to avoid the rich foods and meats of the "king's table" and embark on a more healthful diet, Inner Space Brahma Kumaris Meditation (tel. 521-2015) invites you to its seminar "Why Vegetarianism?" on March 20.

"Vegetarianism is a good springboard to inform people about meditation not only as a form of spirituality but as stress buster as well," says Antonio Santos, who handles the marketing of Inner Space programs. "So as much as possible, we make vegetarianism attractive by connecting it to health lectures like 'Stress-Free Living' (March 6) and 'Healthy U!' (March 18). Body cycles will be discussed in terms of ingestion, for instance."

Low in fat, high in flavor

Many are discovering that less fat doesn't have to mean less flavor. Over the past decade, scientific studies have made it clear that cutting on the consumption of fat can lower the risk of cancer, heart disease and other ailments, making it one of the most important steps we can take toward achieving good health.

"While eating fewer calories should remain a priority, reducing bad fats in our diet is a more direct way to improve—and retain—overall health. Even if we do consume too many calories in the form of fruits, vegetables, starches and legumes, they won't compromise our well-being as much as ingesting excess fat will, particularly saturated fat," says Alma Echano, Inner Space coordinator, who has been a vegetarian for 19 years.

Filipinos have never been as concerned about eating healthfully as they are now, but they also want food that tastes good. So Inner Space offers recipes that are delicious and low in fat during courses on vegetarianism.

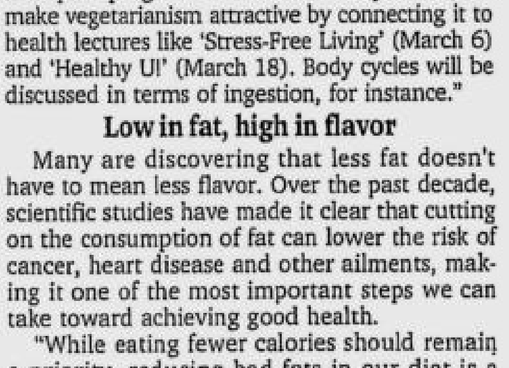
For instance, there's Risotto, cooked rice with carrots, beans, corn, shiitake mushrooms, olive oil and sesame seeds; Buco Steak, *buko* strips cooked in olive oil, soy sauce and calamansi juice; and salad of ripe mango, *chico*, watercress, endives, walnuts and bean sprouts smothered with dressing of yogurt with sesame oil. Pandan Tea with mini *sago* can be served hot or cold.

All the flavors are unusually clear, full, intense. Spirits rise. A sense of well-being and cheer descends.

"Vegetarianism is one of Inner Space's courses that can help prepare you for a spiritual summer. It can help both your mind and body. It's life for the soul," Santos says.

Indeed, when meals are based on seasonal produce, whole grains, legumes, fresh herbs and spices, they're guaranteed to be good in every sense of the word.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph



SALAD of ripe mango, *chico*, walnuts, bean sprouts, watercress and endives

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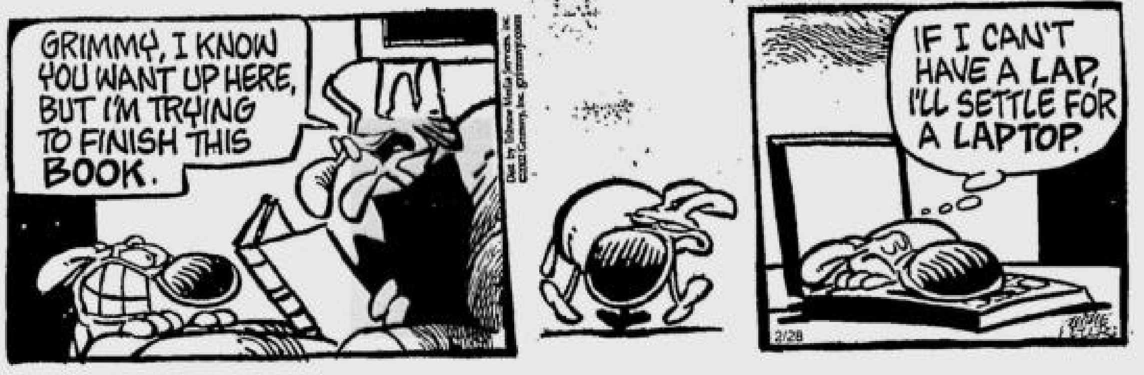
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS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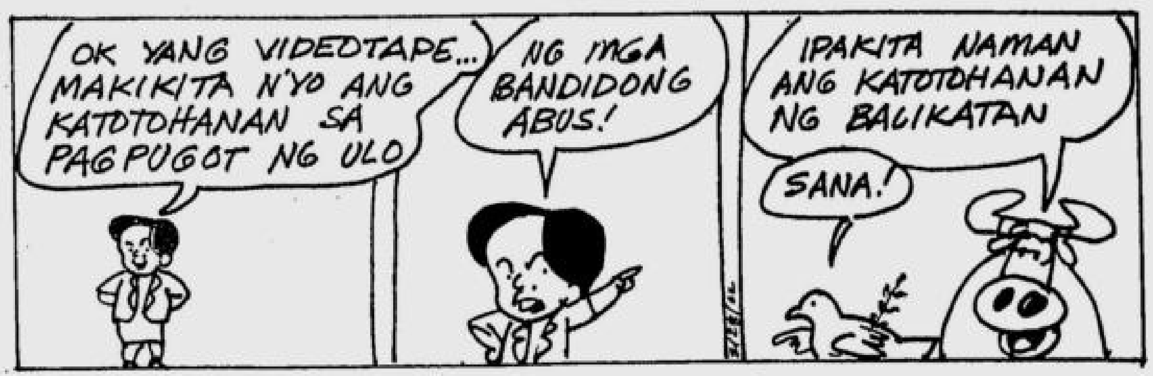
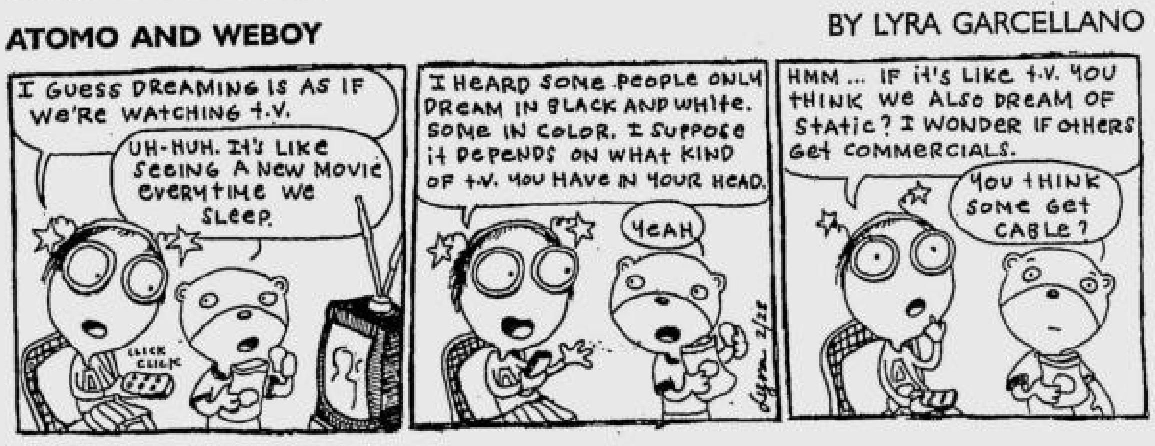
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


OK YANG VIDEOTAPE... MAKIKITA N'YO ANG KATOTOHANAN SA PAGPUGOT NG ULO
NG MGA BANDIDONG ABUS!
IPAKITA NAMAN ANG KATOTOHANAN NG BALIKATAN
SANA.!

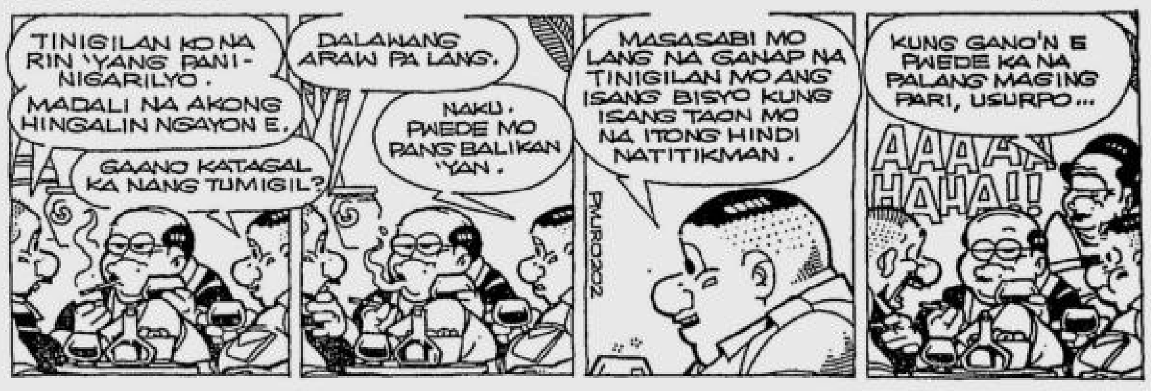
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I GUESS DREAMING IS AS IF WE'RE WATCHING T.V.
UH-HUH. IT'S LIKE SEEING A NEW MOVIE EVERYTIME WE SLEEP.
CLICK CLICK
I HEARD SOME PEOPLE ONLY DREAM IN BLACK AND WHITE. SOME IN COLOR. I SUPPOSE IT DEPENDS ON WHAT KIND OF T.V. YOU HAVE IN YOUR HEAD.
YEAH
HMM ... IF IT'S LIKE T.V. YOU THINK WE ALSO DREAM OF STATIC? I WONDER IF OTHERS GET COMMERCIALS.
YOU THINK SOME GET CABLE?

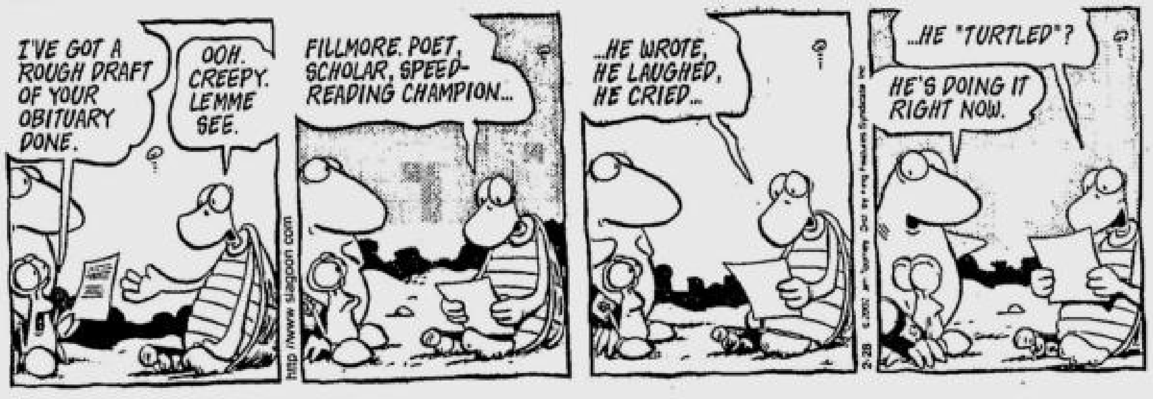
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TINIGILAN KO NA RIN 'YANG PANI-NIGARILYO.
MADALI NA AKONG HINGALIN NGAYON E.
GAANO KATAGAL KA NANG TUMIGIL?
DALAWANG ARAW PA LANG.
NAKU. PWEDE MO PANG BALIKAN 'YAN.
MASASABI MO LANG NA GANAP NA TINIGILAN MO ANG ISANG BISYO KUNG ISANG TAON MO NA ITONG HINDI NATITIKMAN.
KUNG GANO'N E PWEDE KA NA PALANG MAGING PARI, USURPO...
AAAAA HAHA!!

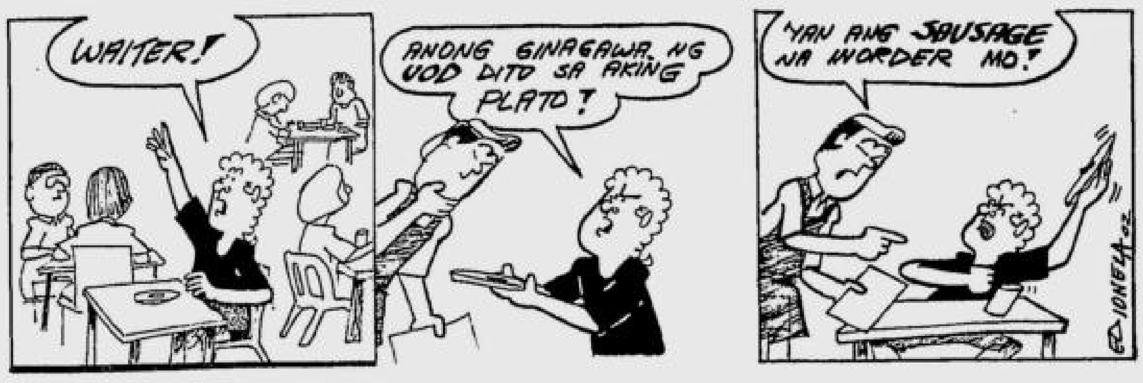
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


I'VE GOT A ROUGH DRAFT OF YOUR OBITUARY DONE.
OOH. CREEPY. LEMME SEE.
FILLMORE. POET, SCHOLAR, SPEED-READING CHAMPION...
...HE WROTE, HE LAUGHED, HE CRIED...
...HE "TURTLED"?
HE'S DOING IT RIGHT NOW.

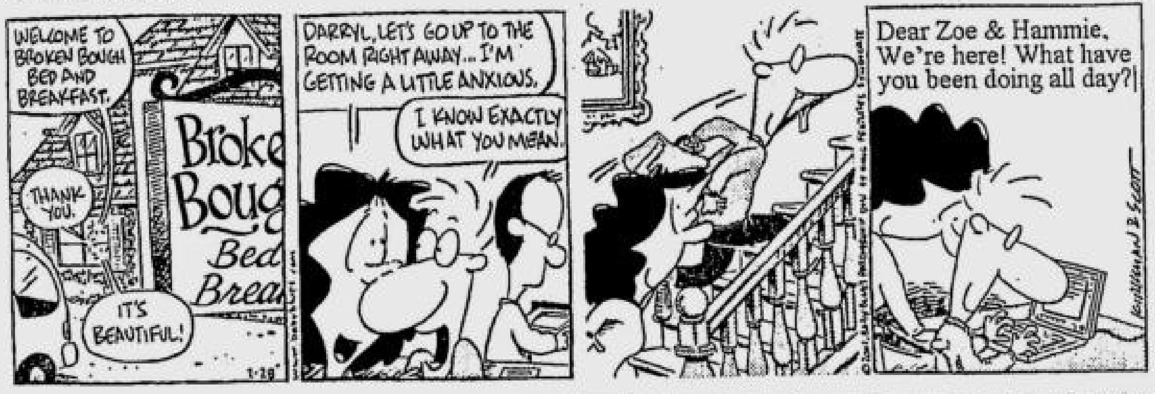
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


WAITER!
ANONG GINAGAWA NG UOD DITO SA AKING PLATO?
'YAN ANG SAUSAGE NA WORDER MO!

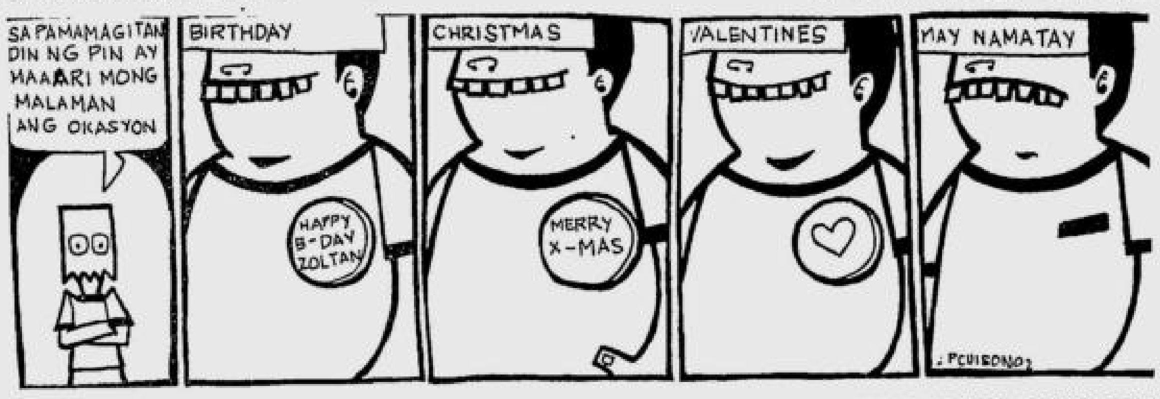
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WELCOME TO BROKEN BOUGH BED AND BREAKFAST.
Broken Bough Bed Breakfast
THANK YOU.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
DARRYL, LET'S GO UP TO THE ROOM RIGHT AWAY... I'M GETTING A LITTLE ANXIOUS.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN.
Dear Zoe & Hammie, We're here! What have you been doing all day?

GARAPATA BLOOD

BY JOHN PAUL CUISON


SA PAMAMAGITAN DIN NG PIN AY MAAARI MONG MALAMAN ANG OKASYON
BIRTHDAY
HAPPY B-DAY ZOLTAN
CHRISTMAS
MERRY X-MAS
VALENTINES
MAY NAMATAY

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Bernadette Peters, Mario Andretti, Gavin MacLeod, Elisa Fiorillo

Happy Birthday: You will be concerned with helping those in need this year. Your dedication will be respected and admired by the people you encounter along the way. You have a great sense of what will work and therefore you should find the success you're searching for. Your numbers are 9, 15, 19, 23, 25, 33

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Make an effort to get to know your peers better. You need to combine a little business with pleasure.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You'll be able to work with fine detail today. Combine a creative project with getting together with friends and socializing. Romance can be yours if you make plans early.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Don't let depression get you down. Stop doing so much for everyone around you and start doing for yourself.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You really need to get out and do things that will stimulate your mind and get you moving in a positive direction. Close friends will be happy to join you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Your emotions regarding your position are running high and if you aren't getting where you want to go, you may have to think about the reasons why.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You'll be caught between wanting to say something and not feeling confident enough to do so. Don't back down; it will only grate on your own nerves.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Something is brewing behind closed doors. Be careful what you say to whom today. You may be taken the wrong way. You should be involved in some sort of creative project that will allow you to develop your talents.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You can ask for favors and get sound advice from close friends. Someone you meet will want to help you get ahead but don't consider contributing cash to any joint financial venture.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You've been working too hard and it's catching up to you. Someone you care about may be difficult to get along with. Back away; you haven't got the strength to deal with discord today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Stop thinking about the things you would like to do and start putting your plans into motion. You can make things happen if you take the initiative.

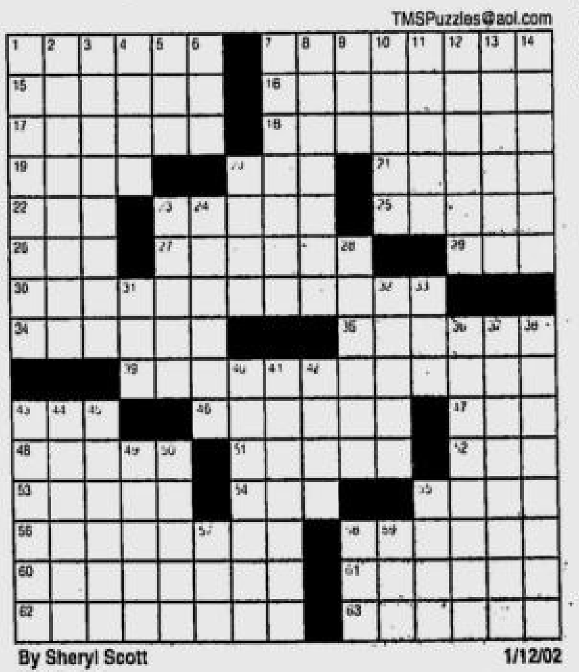
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): If you haven't been taking care of your personal paperwork it is certainly the time to do so. Someone you have a deal with may not be taking care of his or her end of the bargain.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You may be all emotional with regard to a relationship that you are in. An older member of your family may be a little worrisome for you. You must realize that you can't do everything for everyone.

Birthday Baby: You want the best of everything. You are artistic, creative and outgoing. You enjoy entertaining, and will be known for your lavish parties. You love sports and will be a competitive player.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Sheryl Scott
Akron, OH

1/12/02

ACROSS
1 Begin to grow
7 Mandrake
15 Stimulate
16 Angel Gabriel's salutation
17 Scamp
18 Covetous
19 Lillian or Dorothy
20 Nice good?
21 Scandinavian toast
22 Ready when you __!
23 Smarted
25 Military address, casually
26 Take a load off
27 Charlotte hoopster
29 But, to Brutus
30 Preserving for later
34 Basketry willows
35 Create a false impression
39 10/31 catchphrase
43 Coll. sports grp.
46 Entertainer Kazan
47 Circle section
48 Divvy up
51 Consecrate
52 Kind of whiskey
53 Stared open-mouthed
54 Gore and Jarreau
55 Dryer deposit
56 So to speak
58 Projecting rim on a pipe
60 Orthodontic device
61 Texas trooper
62 Manhunts
63 Black Sea port

DOWN
1 Calm area of the Atlantic
2 Rolling grasslands
3 "Goblin Market" poet
4 Sound of pain
5 Dos Passos opus
6 Part of AT&T
7 "Vogue" singer
8 Exacts retribution
9 Certainly!
10 Wrong
11 Anorak
12 Arrest record
13 Reporter's pay scale
14 Scored two under par
20 Small town
23 Make cloth gathers
24 Lymphoid mass of tissue in the mouth
28 Baghdad's river
31 Vietnamese New Year
32 Palm fruits
33 Go astray
36 Awareness of one's position
37 Voice boxes
38 And so on and so forth
40 Nightclub
41 Hit men
42 Smallest bills
43 Home of the Norse gods
44 Beer after liquor
45 Per __ (equally to each person)
49 Mark new prices
50 Astronomer Hubble
55 Suburban side street
57 Compass dir.
58 To and __
59 Young man

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

H	O	N	D	O	■	D	U	O	S	■	A	Q	U	A
E	M	A	I	L	■	I	N	D	O	■	F	U	N	D
A	R	M	E	D	■	A	W	E	S	■	T	A	T	A
T	I	E	T	H	E	B	O	S	O	N	■	R	I	G
■	■	■	S	A	L	O	N	S	■	A	N	K	L	E
E	G	G	■	T	E	L	■	A	C	T	I	I	I	■
B	U	L	B	■	M	I	R	■	H	E	N	N	A	S
B	L	U	E	■	E	C	O	L	I	■	E	E	R	O
S	L	O	G	A	N	■	M	E	A	■	S	S	T	S
■	■	N	E	S	T	S	■	T	N	T	■	S	E	A
J	U	N	T	A	■	T	A	S	T	E	S	■	■	■
U	S	A	■	P	I	O	N	D	I	S	P	L	A	Y
R	A	I	L	■	N	O	N	O	■	T	E	A	S	E
O	G	L	E	■	C	L	A	W	■	E	A	T	I	N
R	E	S	T	■	A	S	S	N	■	D	R	E	S	S

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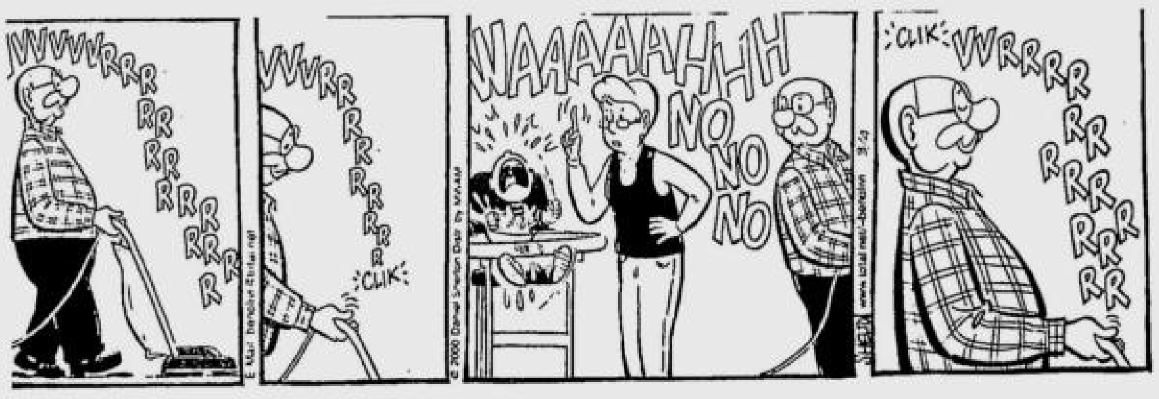
1/12/02

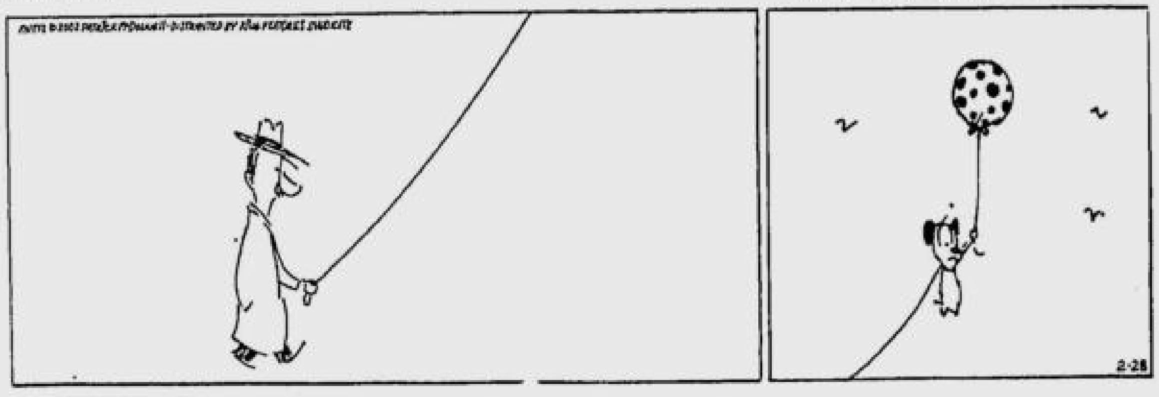
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


VVVVVVRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
VVVRRRRRRRR
CLIK
WAAAAAHHH
NO NO NO NO
CLIK VVRRRRRRRRRRRRR

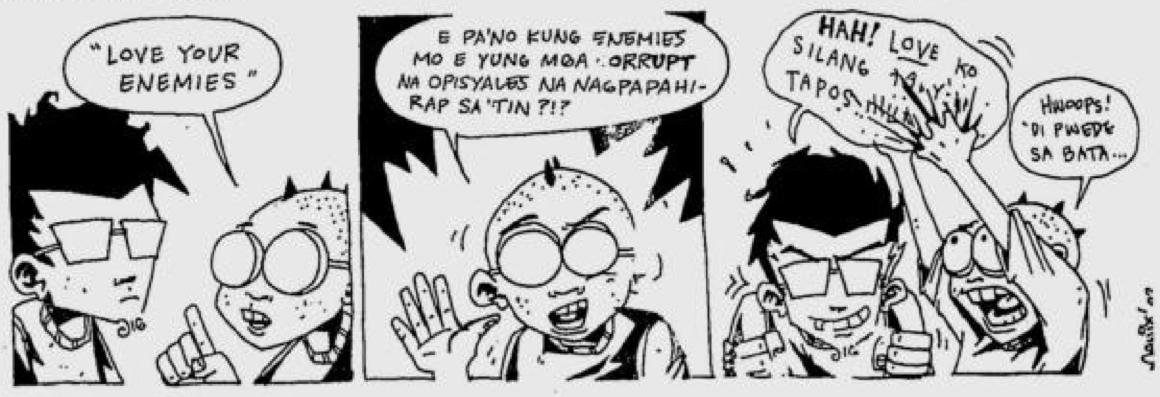
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



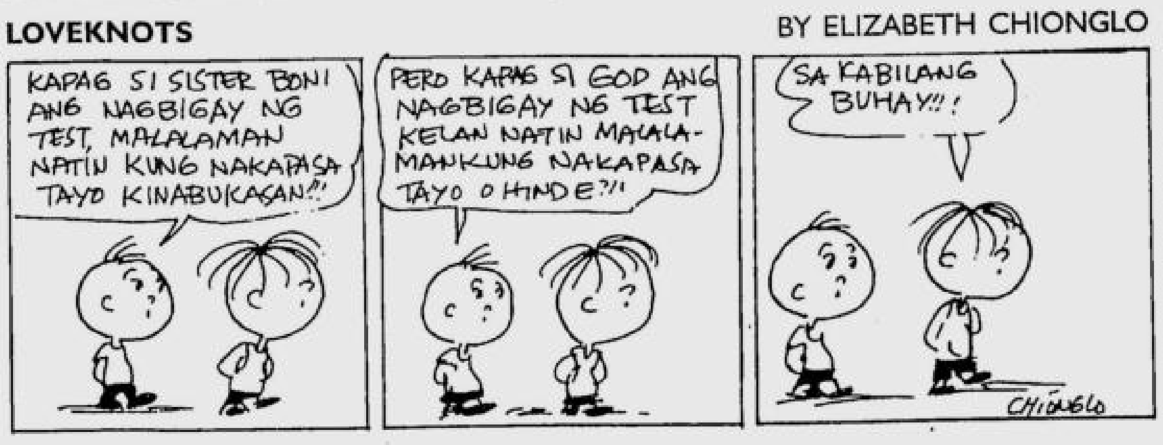
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"
E PA'NO KUNG ENEMIES MO E YUNG MGA CORRUPT NA OPISYALES NA NAGPAPAHI-RAP SA'TIN ?!?
HAH! LOVE KO SILANG TAPOS...
HWOOPS! 'DI PWEDE SA BATA...

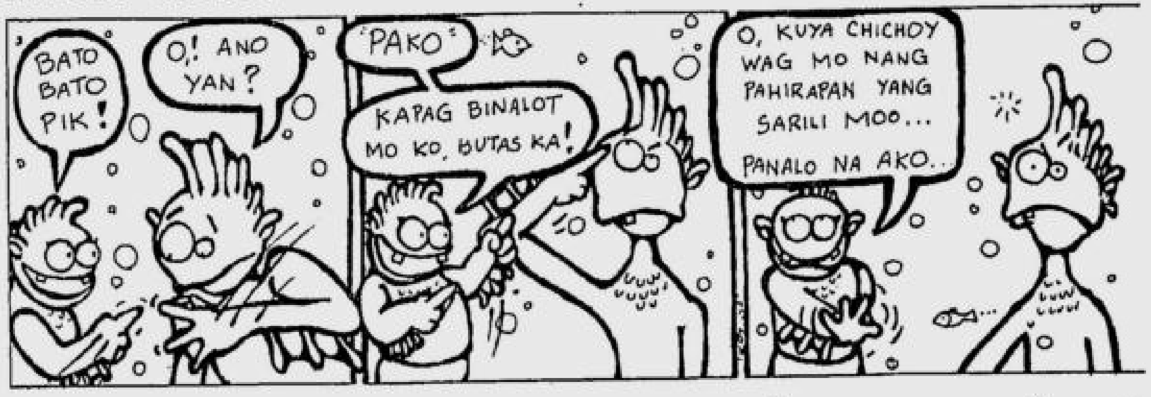
LOVEKNOTS

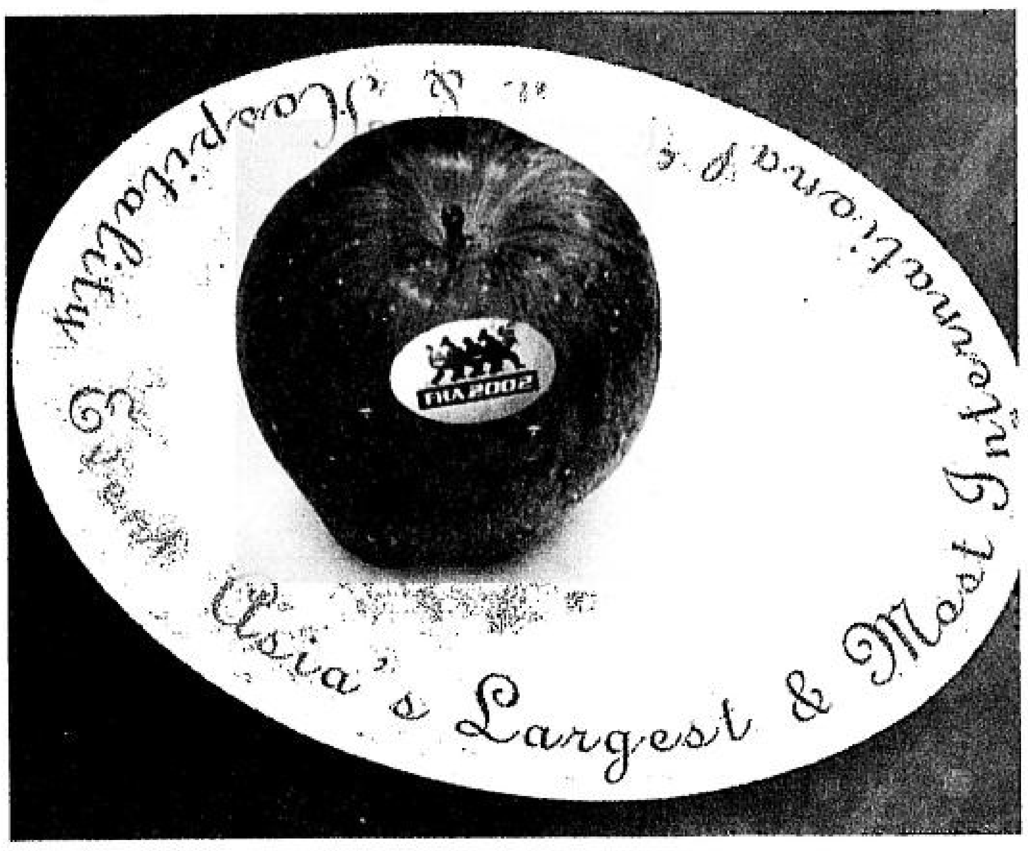
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


KAPAG SI SISTER BONI ANG NAGBIGAY NG TEST, MALALAMAN NATIN KUNG NAKAPASA TAYO KINABUKASAN!"
PERO KAPAG SI GOD ANG NAGBIGAY NG TEST KELAN NATIN MALALAMAN KUNG NAKAPASA TAYO O HINDE?!
SA KABILANG BUHAY!!!
CHIONGLO

CHICHOY CHOKOY

BY IKOY RICIO


BATO BATO PIK!
O! ANO YAN?
'PAKO'
KAPAG BINALOT MO KO, BUTAS KA!
O, KUYA CHICHOY WAG MO NANG PAHIRAPAN YANG SARILI MOO...
PANALO NA AKO.



EXHIBITORS and visitors at FHA 2000

RP companies to join Asia's premier food and hospitality exhibition

FHA2002 (Food & Hotel Asia 2002), billed as Asia's largest and most important food and hospitality industry event, will be held from April 9-12 at the Singapore Expo.

More than 30 Philippine companies led by San Miguel Corporation, Marco Polo Foods, Conagra Foods Grocery Products, DLA and other organizations involved in the food business and hospitality sector are participating.

"We are indeed encouraged by the positive show of support by companies from the Philippines," said Mr Ben Wong, project director (Lifestyle Events), Singapore Exhibition Services Pte Ltd.

Prominent organizations such as Teope, Goldland Philippines, Grand East, Puregold, Sermasison, Jimac, King's, Legend Hotel, and Philippine Airlines have already pre-registered to attend the event.

"This attests to FHA's standing as an established regional food and hospitality trade event and its relevance to industry professionals from the Philippines," he added.

Expected to attend FHA2002 are over 400 F&B and hospitality professionals.

FoodAsia2002

As a dedicated food show which highlights a myriad of food products aimed to satisfy both international and regional needs, FoodAsia2002 showcases the latest and most innovative food products that shape and influence Asian culinary trends, It brings together chefs, retailers and trade professionals in the food industry. With over 90% of the show being booked, special highlights include features on tea and coffee products, as well as fresh produce.

As a new feature of FoodAsia2002, FreshProduce2002 specifically caters to the suppliers and distributors in the fresh fruit and vegetable industry which has been growing in line with the shift in lifestyle patterns. Asiafruit Congress, Asia's only fresh fruit and vegetable conference, will also be held alongside FHA2002 to value-add to the event. Wine&SpiritsAsia2002, on the other hand, will provide buyers and suppliers with a comprehensive range of products to supply Asia's continually growing demand for alcoholic beverages.

HotelAsia2002

Featuring a wide range of hospitality-related services and products, HotelAsia2002 will have the participation of international companies such as Ali-Spa, AltoShaam, Enodis, Hatco, Hobart, Sanyo and Somerville. Buyers sourcing for furnishing and fixtures, tableware, lighting and accessories are bound to find something of their choice at HospitalityStyleAsia2002.

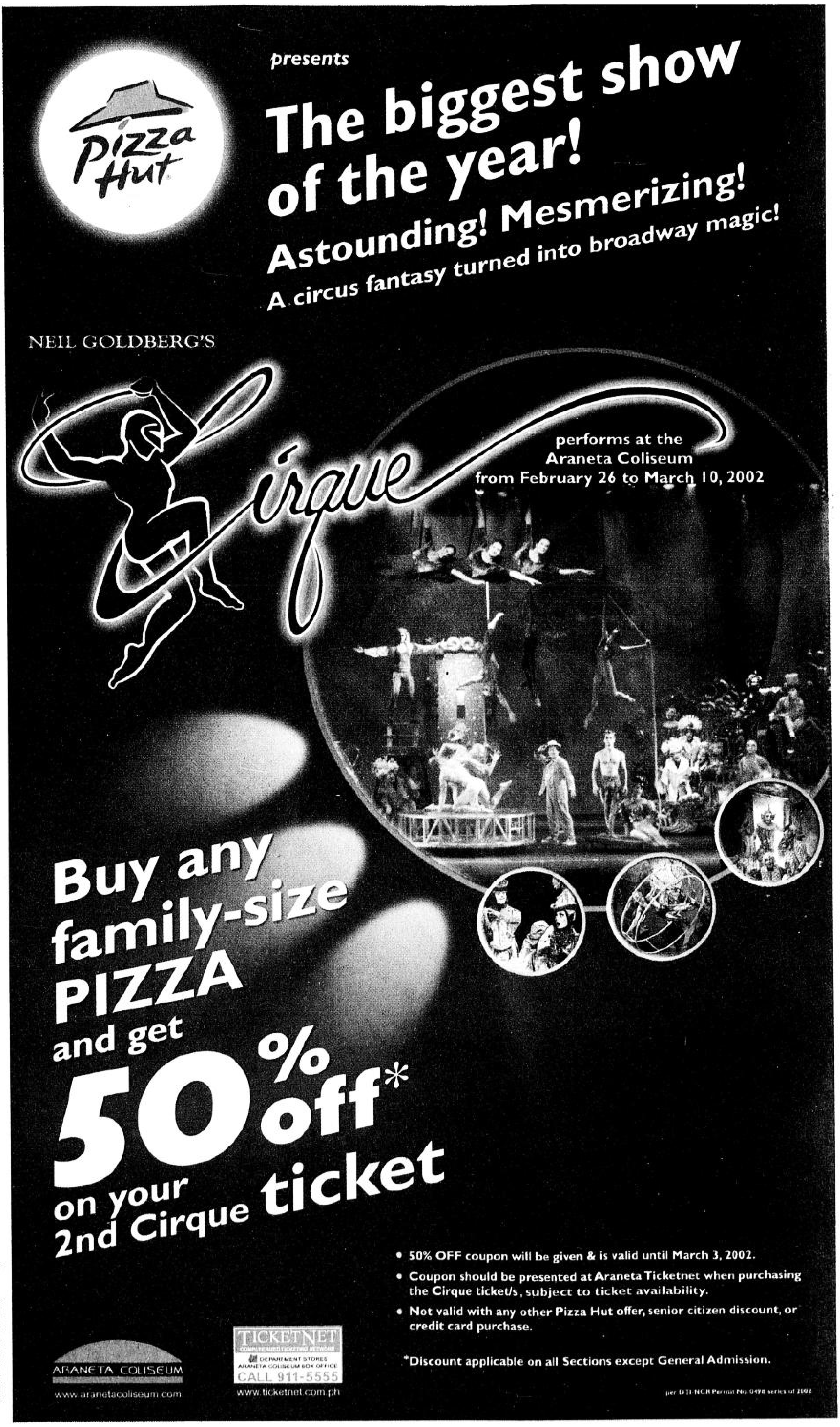
Presenting the latest technological developments in the F&B and hospitality industry, ServiceTechAsia2002 opens up new frontiers by showing how innovative and strategic use of technology can propel the industry to greater heights, while BakeryAsia2002 showcases the latest equipment and supplies for the bakery and confectionery industry.

FHA2002 also features the well-reputed FHA Culinary Challenge (formerly known as *Salon Culinaire)*. To date, it has garnered the support of as many as 16 chef associations.

Now on its 13th version, FHA2002 is expected to occupy some 65, 000 sq.m. in the Singapore Expo, with each sector of the show catering specifically to the rapidly growing needs of various food and hospitality sectors.

FHA was launched in 1978 with 213 participants. This year, some 2,650 companies from over 67 countries are expected to attend. Visitors to the FHA have included retailers, hospitality business managers, importers-wholesalers-distributors, bakery and confectionery manufacturers and retailers, consultants, institutional caterers, and manufacturers.

Over the years, the show has developed into a world-class exhibition catering to the growing and distinct sectors in the food and hospitality industries, thus becoming known as The Event in Asia . Hotels and restaurants being at the forefront of shaping Asian culinary trends, the demand for new or international food and drink products is often created by introducting products to the exciting and dynamic menus found in the region's top eateries where chefs are keen to impress diners with variety and innovation. In addition, food retail sales in Asia are on the rise. The Asean countries alone have 500 million people with US $700 billion economy. Asia has more than half the world's population and a quarter of the global gross domestic product.



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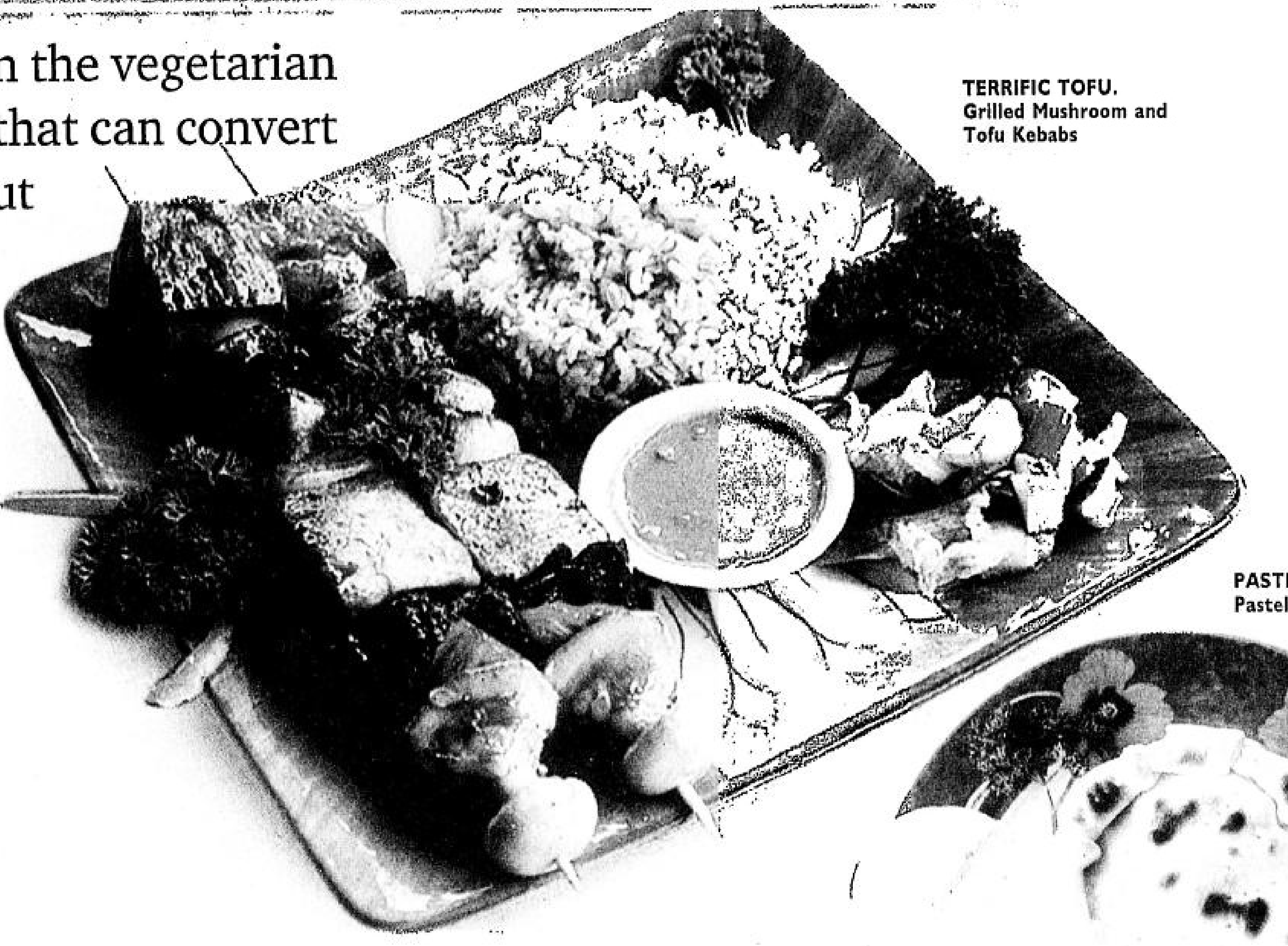
Eat your Greens

The newest player in the vegetarian market serves food that can convert even the most devout of carnivores



TERRIFIC TOFU. Grilled Mushroom and Tofu Kebabs

PASTEL PERFECT. Pastel de Vegetal

By Cathy Babao-Guballa
Photos by Mike Alquinto

A DECADE ago, vegetarian food was synonymous with salads and bland meat substitutes. Over the last five years, perhaps owing to studies hailing the benefits of fiber and the wonders of anti-oxidants found in yellow and green leafy food, there has been a surge in the number of vegetarians, organic markets and vegetarian restaurants. The newest player is a cool, quiet, calming oasis tucked away in the suburbs of Quezon City. Greens Restaurant and Café (20-A Sct. Tuazon cor Sct. Castor, tel. 410-2440) dishes out tasty and affordable vegetarian food that can convert even the devoutly carnivorous to the joys of eating green.

Wally and Mary Ann Duran have been practicing vegetarians for 30 and 15 years, respectively. Mary Ann, according to Wally, "turned vegetarian out of love." One half-expects Wally to say he has been a vegan since birth because, take note, he looks 30 but is actually fortysomething.

If that doesn't convince you to shift to vegetarianism, little else will.

Exercise and healthy eating make good bedfellows. The Durans also own and run the Powerflex gym in QC. "I would prepare food at the gym and people would ask where they could buy more," Mary Ann says. Realizing that there was a dearth of vegetarian places in town, the couple decided to open a small resto in August last year.

Greens has a loyal clientele that cuts across ages. "We have students and professors from the UP, people from ABS-CBN and GMA 7, residents from the Scout area, *iba-iba*," Wally observes. "We even have families who come all the way from Alabang," Mary Ann adds. Understandably, people come to Greens mainly for two things—the calming ambiance and the great, affordable food.

Soothing interiors

Small, quaint and cozy, Greens' dining area can comfortably seat 40 people; the porch, perhaps another 20. It was designed by Wally's architect-father, Vicente Duran, who made use of a lot of old recycled wood from the family's ancestral home. Portions of old steel windows have been used as dividers and old wooden cornices accentuate the restaurant's facade. The colors used are soothing—lavander and apple green with touches of aqua. There are flowers, mostly chrysanthemums in bright hues of yellow and pink, on tables that Mary Ann herself arranged. In the background there is music to feed and calm the weary soul. "People come here and say that after an hour *nawawala na ang* stress *nila*," Mary Ann says. "Stress-free *din kasi ang* prices *namin*," Wally quips.

Definitely, the prices at Greens are affordable and the food healthy and very tasty. Even non-vegans will enjoy the wide array of offerings at this restaurant. Top sellers are the Grilled Mushroom and Tofu Kebabs (P95), marinated fresh button mushrooms and tofu, red and green bell peppers, zucchini and shallots served with the special Greens peanut sauce, and the Pastel de Vegetal (P95), a mix of gluten, mushroom, potato, carrots, olives and legumes crowned by a golden brown crust.

The Mushroom Tofu Burger (P75) is a mixture of tofu, mushrooms, yellow onion, scallions, wheat germ, oats, bread crumbs, and

EAT/ p.C2

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For feedback, text us at (0918)917-5026 or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Tastes

SANGRIA, salad and a selection of *tapas*

The latest baby of restaurateur Larry Cruz serves superlative Spanish and Mediterranean food

A year, a place and a taste to remember

MIL Novecientos is the name of Larry Cruz's latest restaurant. Why? Because, first of all, it is the address: 1900 M. Adriatico at Remedios Circle, Malate (tel. 521-6682).

IN GOOD TASTE

Doreen G. Fernandez

Secondly, it is a Tapas Bar and Restaurant, featuring Spanish and Mediterranean food.

Thirdly, it is meant to recall the year 1900, a year resonant in Philippine history, the year of: the arrival of American volunteer forces under Gen. William A. Knobbe to begin a campaign to reopen the hemp ports in Bicol (Jan. 20); the appointment by President McKinley of the members of the Second Philippine Commission, namely William Howard Taft, Henry Ide, Luke Wright, Bernard Moses and Dean Worcester (March 16); the arrival of the Taft Commission (June 4); the arrival of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo and his army in Palanan, Isabela, his last hideout from pursuing American forces (Sept. 6); the League of Peace, founded by Pedro Paterno and Felipe Buencamino, is renamed the Partido Federal, which becomes active in supporting the American administration of the country, and encouraging the revolutionaries to lay down their arms (Dec. 23).

A momentous year and the turn of the century.

We visited the restaurant before its formal opening (on Feb. 14, with a Valentine's Day dinner and flamenco dancers). It was the dry run, meant to, as Larry put it, test the kitchen, check on the chefs' readiness and prowess (they are LJC Restaurant Group chefs, among them one Ninoy Aquino of Tarlac, trained by the Spanish chefs brought in by Instituto Cervantes), and shape—and re-shape—the menu. Larry said he thought he could do without some standards found in almost every other Hispanic and Spanish restaurant: *salpicao, callos, lengua*, etc. But inevi-

A YEAR/ p.D3

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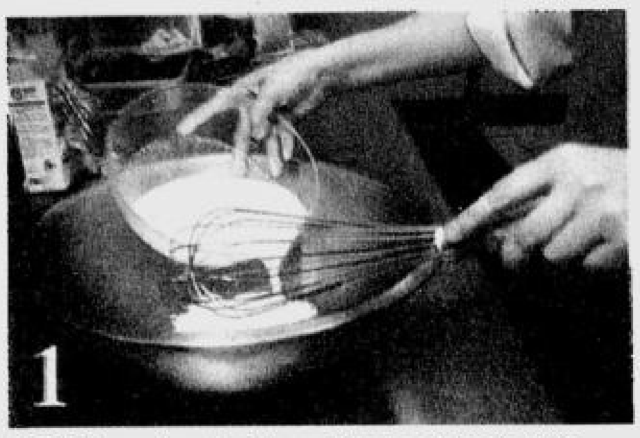
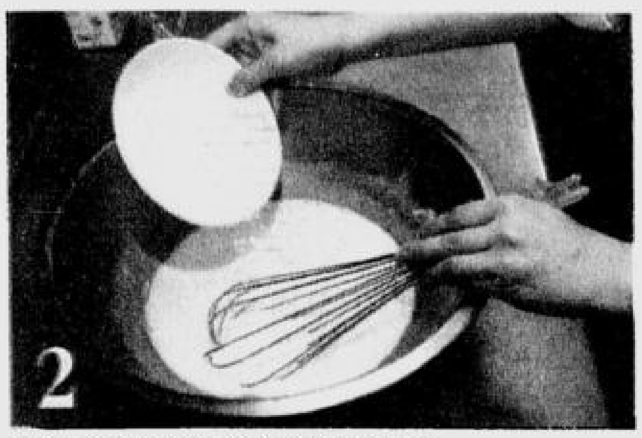
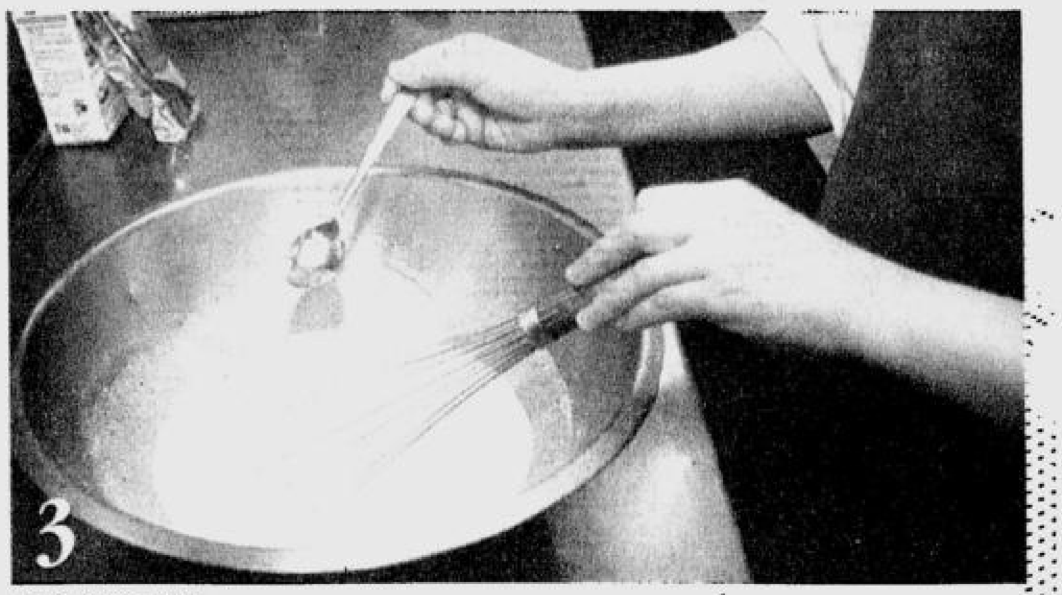
There's nothing like 'tibok-tibok' made from pure, fresh carabao milk



BLEND powdered milk and fresh carabao's milk thoroughly in a bowl.



ADD sugar and cornstarch. Mix well.



ADD lemon rind.

Delicate delicacy

By Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

TIBOK-TIBOK is a popular Capampangan delicacy and is particularly coveted during special occasions. This native dessert, also known as *maja blanca* in other provinces, tastes best if prepared the traditional way—using only pure, fresh carabao's milk. No flour, no gelatin, no extenders, please!

Aside from carabao's milk, cornstarch is used to help thicken the mixture, as well as powdered milk to create a creamy, rich flavor. Lemon rind is added for extra fragrance,

Diana Santamaria, executive vice president for sales and marketing for Tri-Chefs Food Corp., which runs and operates Ima Restaurant at St. Francis Square in Mandaluyong, shares with us Pampanga's way of cooking *tibok-tibok*. It's a pretty handy recipe and ideal for afternoon *merienda* or a sweet finale to a sumptuous meal.

Tibok-tibok must be cooked slowly in low fire and stirred constantly to prevent lumps. If you cannot get hold of fresh carabao's milk, you can use Magnolia's fresh cow's milk. Generously sprinkle *latik* on top. *Latik* is made from *kakanggata* (first extract of coconut cream), cooked until the oil comes out and leaves some solid crumbs. To make *latik*, place grated coconuts in cheesecloth. Wring to get 1 cup thick coconut milk. Strain and set aside. Repeat using 2 cups warm water. Strain and set aside. Boil thick coconut milk until oil comes out and *latik* is brown but not burnt.

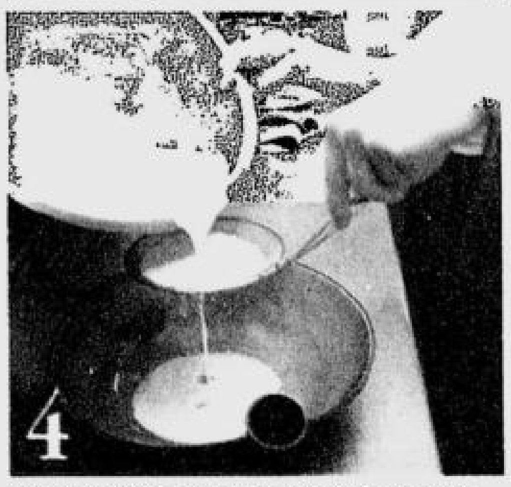
What goes well with *tibok-tibok* is a hot cup of *salabat* (ginger tea). Diana makes this native drink by boiling together water, fresh ginger (sliced) and brown sugar. Add more water if the tea is too strong and strain before serving hot or cold. *Tibok-tibok* is very sweet, so cut into small, bite-size portions. This recipe yields 20 slices.

Ingredients

1½ c powdered milk
5 c fresh carabao's milk
¾ c cornstarch
¾ c sugar
A dash of lemon extract or lemon rind

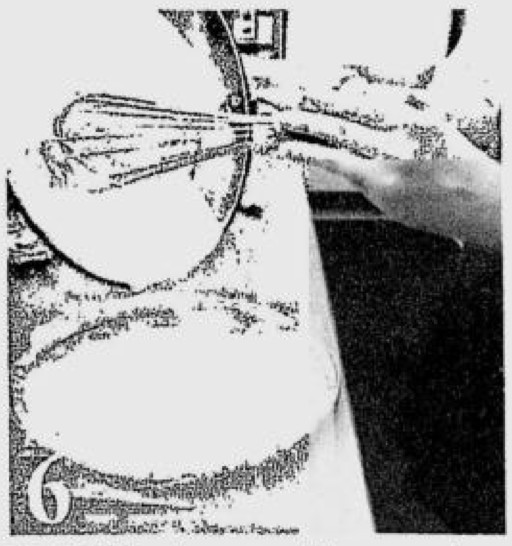
For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga @inquirer.com.ph

STEP-BY-STEP

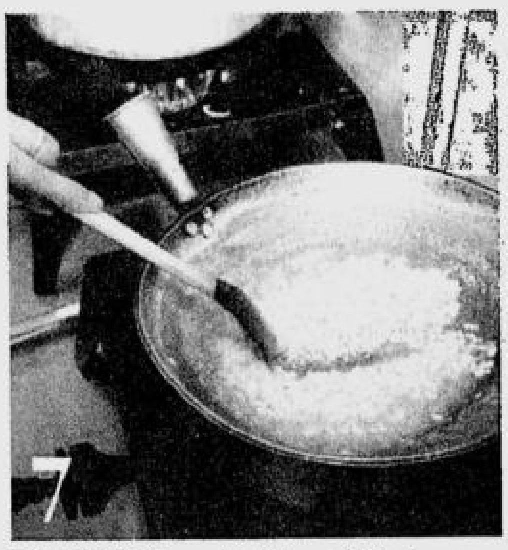


STRAIN mixture and place in a cooking pan.

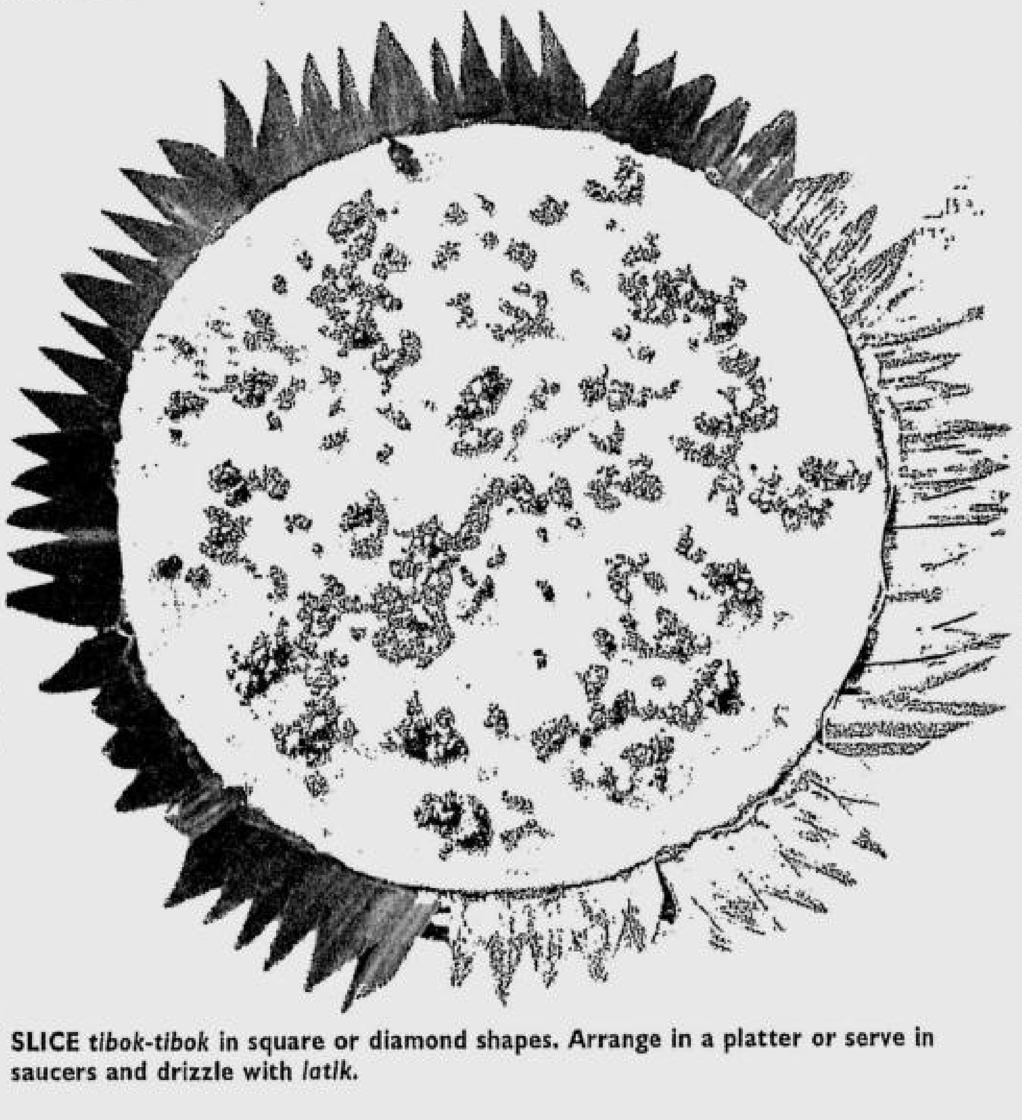
COOK over very low fire for about 30 minutes, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. Add a dash of lemon rind for extra fragrance.



TRANSFER mixture to a *bilao* covered with greased wax paper. Let cool and allow to set.



MEANWHILE, cook *latik* until it's brown but not burnt.



SLICE *tibok-tibok* in square or diamond shapes. Arrange in a platter or serve in saucers and drizzle with *latik*.

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March 14, 16, 19, 21. All classes begin at 2 pm at the Julius Maggi Kitchen, Ground Floor, Nestlé Center, 31 Plaza Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City. For reservations, please call 726-9232 or 726-1016. All sessions are for two hours.

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MIL Novecientos interiors

ANGULAS Bilbaina, elvers from Spain

GENOAN arugula salad

A year, a place and a taste to remember

From page D1

tably someone asks for them, so he yields to habit and memory.

We (my Australian guest, my nurse, Larry and his family) grazed, sampled, explored, re-tasted and enjoyed ourselves. A pitcher of the house *sangria,* first of all (although one could also have sherry, a *rioja,* or *cava* Spanish champagne).

Here's what came in an easy procession to our table: little squares of Tortilla Española (potato and onion omelet), superb Boquerones Barcelona, smelt or *dilis* in olive oil with slivers of elephant garlic—the fish melting, tender, the table's favorite. Where did you get this? I asked Larry, thinking he must have a distant, exotic source. He checked with the kitchen and answered, "Cartimar."

Also superlative: fat and tender 1-inch squid with soft tentacles in olive oil and lemon. Escalibada, mixed Mediterranean vegetables (eggplant, capsicum, etc.) marinated and grilled in olive oil and garlic. Banderillas, mini skewers of cherry tomatoes, pimientos, mushrooms, olives, cheese, shrimp and *dilis* in different combinations.

Angulas Bilbaina are the tiny eels (elvers) from Spain, in olive oil, garlic and some chili. Babe Trotters are mini *pata* simmered in red wine and bouquet garni, billed as a favorite in Barcelona bars. The Tripoli combo is a platter of *hummus* (Lebanon), *baba ganouj* (Egypt), lamb *kibbeb* (Libya), *kalamata* olives (Greece) and *pita* bread.

Soups we sampled were the French onion soup with Gruyere cheese, and the cold *gazpacho* of Andalucia. There also are *minestrone* (Palermo), lentil soup (Tunisia) and the undying *sopa de ajo* of Spain.

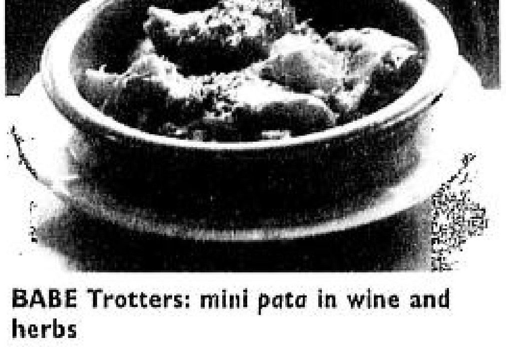
The arugula salad (Genoa) was wonderful: crisp greens, *feta* cheese cubes, caramelized walnuts in balsamic-honey vinaigrette. And so were the *paellas,* in small shallow *paelleras* of a special enamel, so that the *tutong* (crust) could form and be scraped off as the final touch for the cognoscenti. We had Paella Lorenzo, rice *al dente* with *sisig,* sprinkled with crisp garlic flakes. And Paella Verde, with shrimps and herbs, for the vegetarian with us. There are as well Paella Negra, and Paella Valencia as prepared by Chef Palomo of the Picanterra restaurant in Valencia, one of the Spanish chefs who visited and trained LJC chefs.

Sheik's Pigeon Pie (Lebanon) has to be ordered the day before, being pigeons and broccoli in *phyllo* pastry, a small pie recalling the thousand and one nights of Scheherazade. "Cruising the Mediterranean," the section from which this comes, includes Nile Perch (Egypt) also known as St. Peter's Fish (of the miracle of the loaves and fishes), or *tilapia,* fried in olive oil till crackling-crisp, smothered with popped garlic.

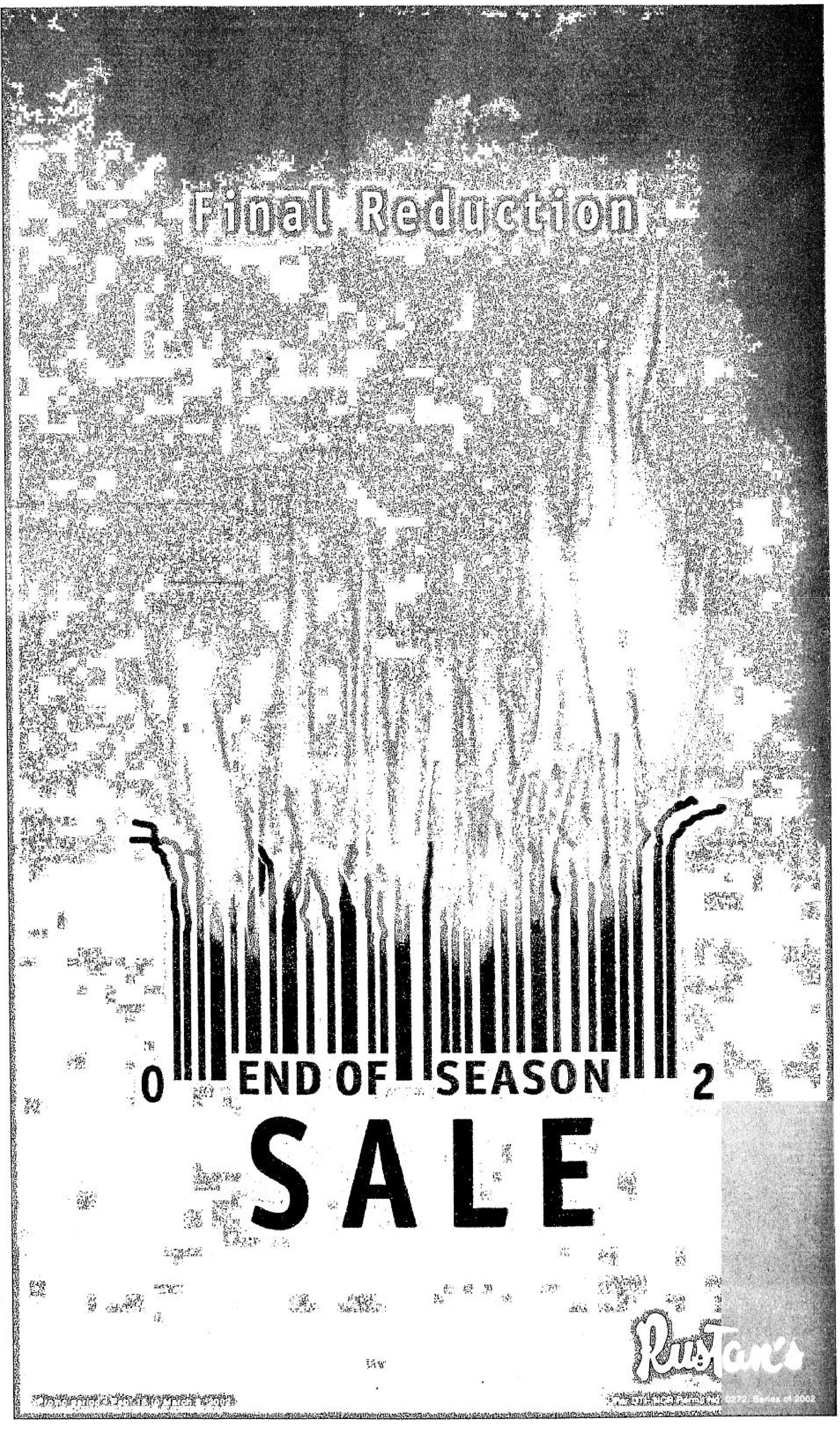
And there's Bourride, the Provencal fish stew; *fricassee* of rabbit (France); *bouillabaisse* (Marseilles), lamb *couscous* (Tangiers, Morocco), grilled lamb ribs (Athens), Fabada Asturiana. And pastas and pizzas, including Pizza Mil Novecientos with *jamon Serrano* and bell peppers.

If you can still manage dessert, try the soufflés (Chocolate Eh, Ube, Macapuno, Banana) or the Crema Catalana, Cassata Siciliana, Baklava, and more.

By the time you get to Mil Novecientos, the menu may have been reshaped, but Larry promises that it will be worthy of its locational, cultural and historical name.



BABE Trotters: mini *pata* in wine and herbs



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At Deco Centrum, home products include collections from Baccarat, Lalique, Bernardaud, Christofle, Daum, Royal Doulton, Rosenthal, Swarovski, WMF and Henredon. Some of these brands will be showcased at the first floor, which is transformed into a tea salon, the likes of which can only be found in Paris and other key locations in Europe.

On hand is The French Baker general manager Johnlu Koa, who will introduce the St. Dalfour organic tea, produced originally in France and available at The French Baker's outlets in Metro Manila, Pampanga and Metro Cebu.

GINA Y. NAVARRO

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JAPANESE
By ***Seiji Kamura***, Chef & Restaurateur, Kasei and Juan Miro
March 14 & 21 (Thursdays) 2:30-5:30 p.m. ~ P2,700 for two days
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STEAKS & BARBEQUES
By ***Eli Aurelio***, Chef & Restaurateur, Tom Sawyer
March 15 & 22 (Fridays) 2-5 p.m. ~ P2,700 for two days
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CONTEMPORARY CAKES
By ***Gina Y. Navarro***, Culinary Instructor, Food Stylist - Food Magazine
March 16 & 23 (Saturdays) 2-5 p.m. ~ P2,500 for two days
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CATERING MENU
By ***Cecille Chua Chiaco-Aurelio***, Caterer
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March 2 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Calamares Steak, Crab Claws with Green Sauce, Baby Octopus Salad with Special Sauce, Crispy Crablets with Spicy Sauce, Catfish Teriyaki and Blue Marlin Mariniere. Bonus: Scalewing ("Pagi" Wings) with Sambal Sauce and Frog Legs with Garlic Sauce. Tips on the different species of blue marlin, salmon fish, squids and shrimps. Enrolment is on a first come, first served basis. P750.

Kakanin: March 2 (Sat) 1:30 - 5 p.m. Cassava Cake, Pichi-Pichi, Bibingkang Malagkit, Sapin-Sapin, Cuchinta. Bonus: Maya Bibingka and Puto. P550.

Japanese Cooking: Mar. 9 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Miso Soup, Mixed Tempura, Sukiyaki, Kamameshi and 7 kinds of Sushi preparations. P800.

Baking with Institutional Mixes: Mar. 9 (Sat) 1:30 - 5 p.m. Assorted Brownies (Black Forest, Apple Chunk, Rocky Road), Pineapple Carrot Cake, Choco-Banana Loaf, Chocolate Muffins with Fudge Frosting, Hotdog on Stick, Butterscotch Squares and Chocolate Crinkles. Bonus: Chocolate Rhumballs. P500.

Catering: Mar. 16 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Portion Control, Costing, Inventory, Table Layout & Equipment Sourcing with actual preparation of popular catering dishes: Morcon, Galantina, Pork Asado, Soy Chicken, Roast Pork, Baked Macaroni, All-Meat Paella and special Gulaman dessert. P1,500.

Linen Presentation: Mar. 16 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. A dozen style of napkin folding and table skirting with free take home material. P550.

Cakeshop Specialties: Mar. 16 (Sat) 1:30 - 5 p.m. Sylvana, Caramel Crunch Cake, White Forest Cake, Tiramisu, Chocolate Custard Cake with Macapuno. P 600.

Restaurant Operations: Mar. 23 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Kitchen organization, cycle menu planning, costing, cost control, purchasing, labor, payroll, inventory, etc. Proven techniques on profitable service operations with free lunch. P1,500.

CERTIFICATE COURSES WITH HANDS - ON:

Cooking I (Basic Cooking) **For Messman, Stewards and Beginners:** Mar. 12 - 15 or Apr. 2 - 5 (T - F) 1:30 - 5 p.m. Basic food preparation, cooking methods for vegetables, pasta, meats and poultry dishes; Techniques of de-boning chicken and fish; Basic garnishing; Table setting and napkin folding; Actual preparation of popular Filipino and Oriental dishes. P 2,200.

Cooking II (Comprehensive Cooking) **For Career Cooks:** Mar. 20 - 22 (W- F) or Apr. 11 - 13 (Th - S) 9 a.m. -1 p.m. Coverage: menu planning, international standard techniques of preparing stocks, soups, sauces, dressings, salads, main dishes, homemade cold cuts, etc., applicable to 1001 recipes including plate and platter presentation. Free lunch. P2,500.

Basic Baking: Mar. 20 - 22 (W - F) or Apr. 11 - 13 (Th - S) 9 a.m. -1 p.m. Hands-on techniques in preparing basic pie crust, different types of cakes, quick bread, yeast breads and more. P2,000.

Cake Decoration: Mar. 23 & Apr. 6 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Lecture-workshop on fundamentals of cake decorating: coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate, sugar icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making and bunching and motif. Free decorating tips. P 2,000

For reservations and inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen at the 8th Floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1165 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at *mayakitchen@pacific.net.ph*

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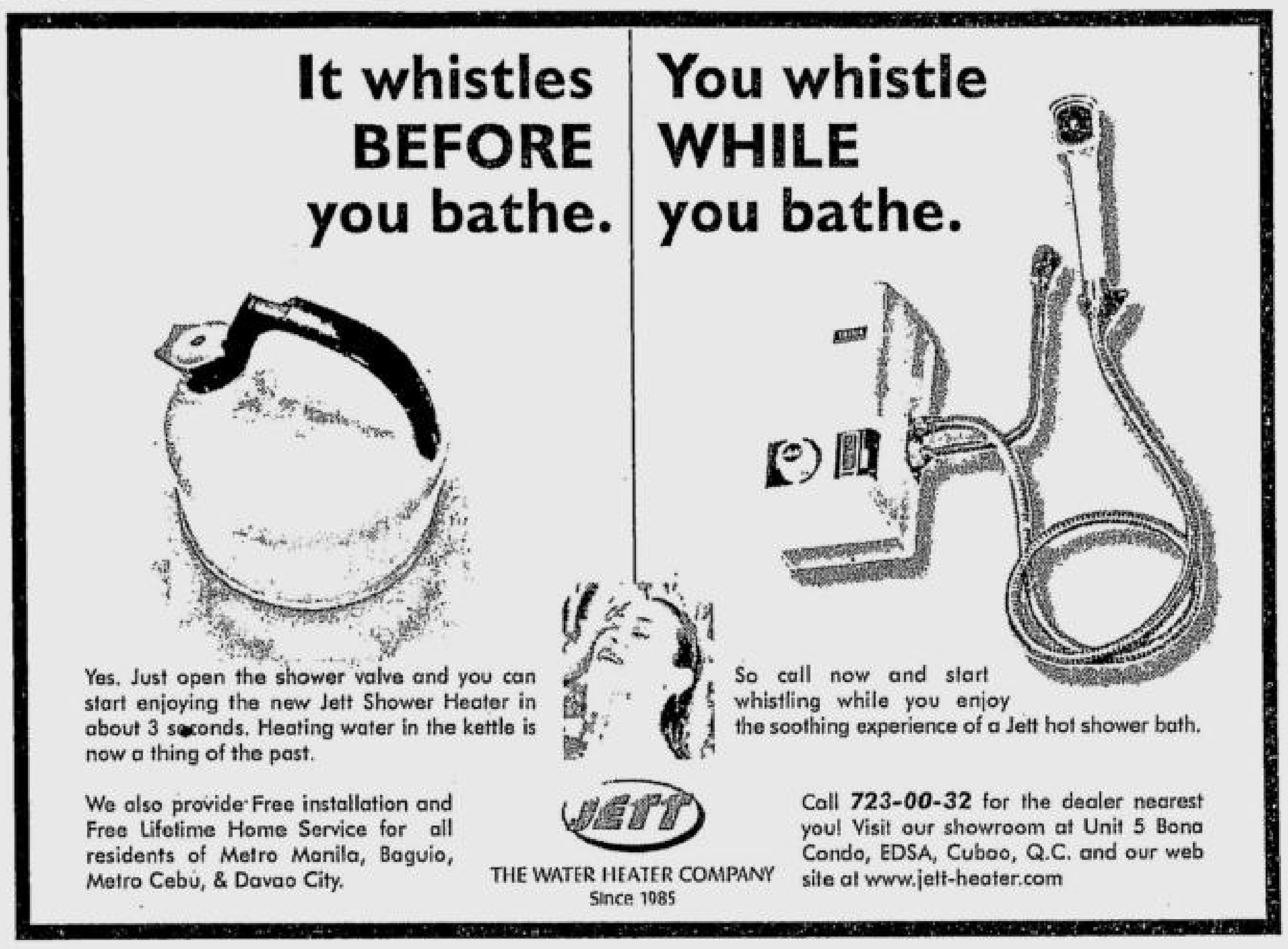
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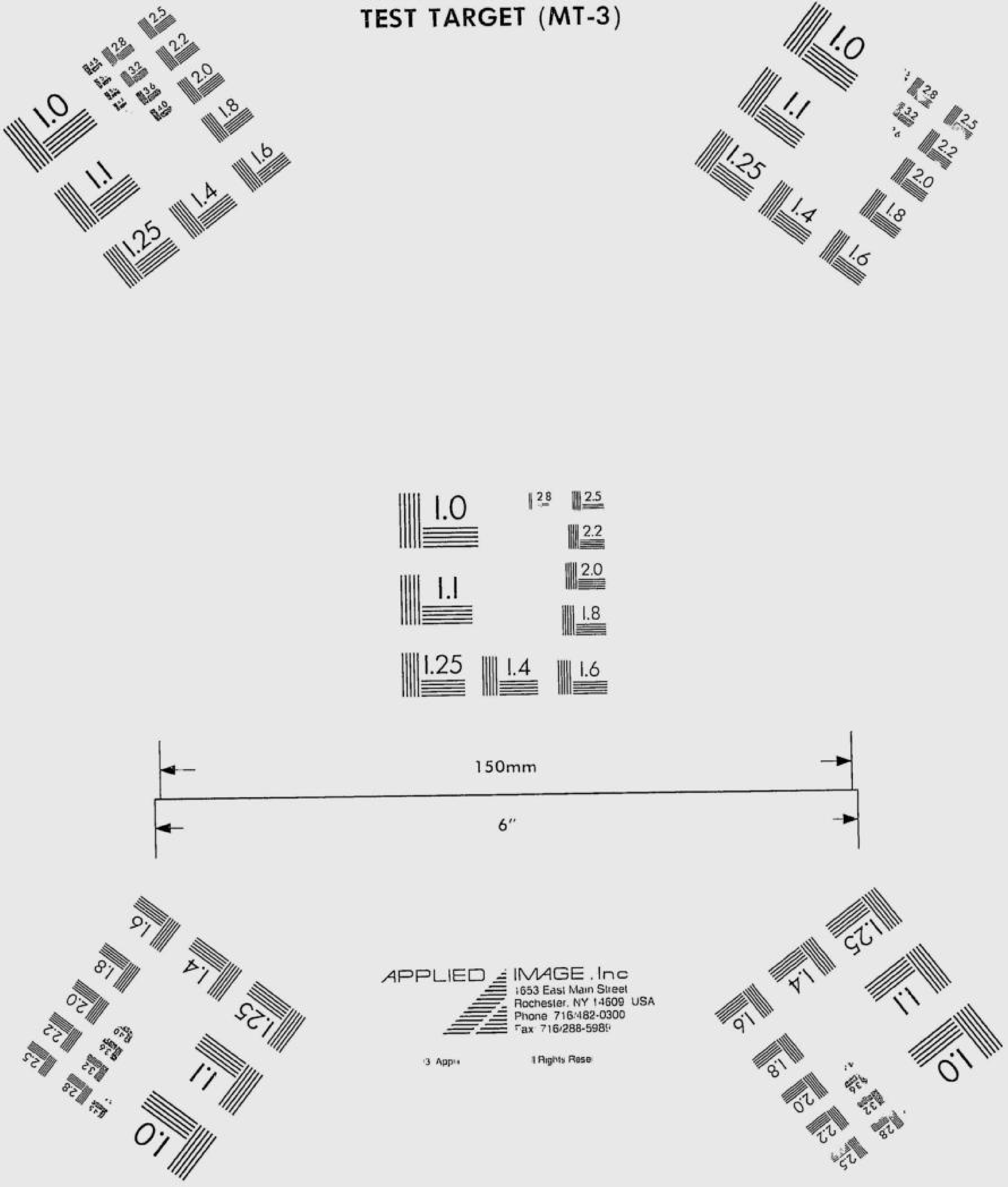
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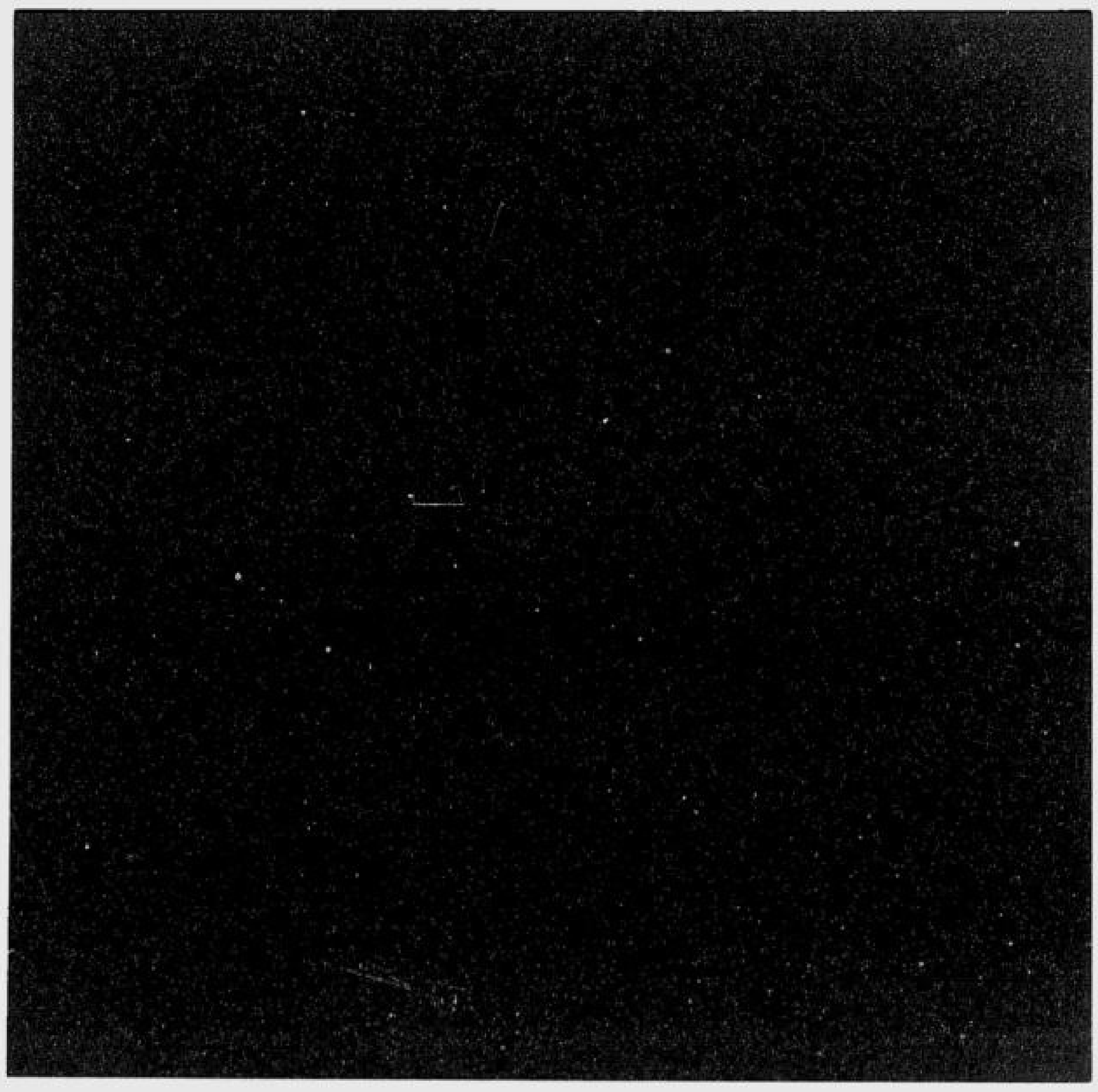

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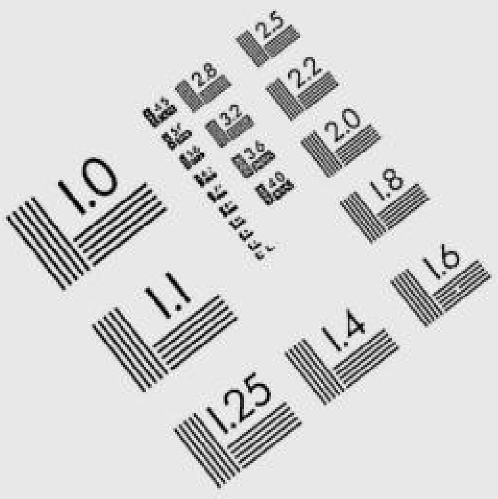
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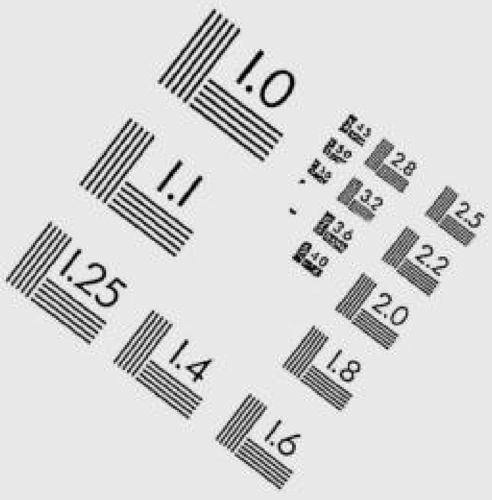
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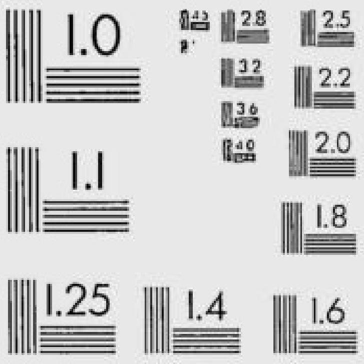
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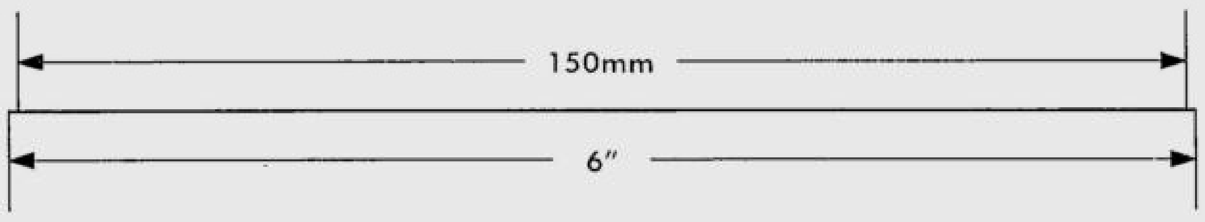

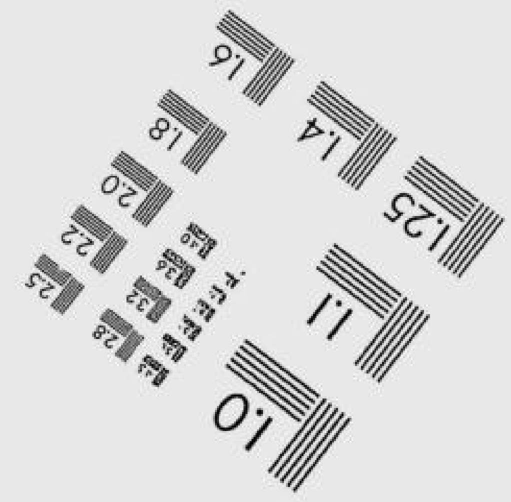
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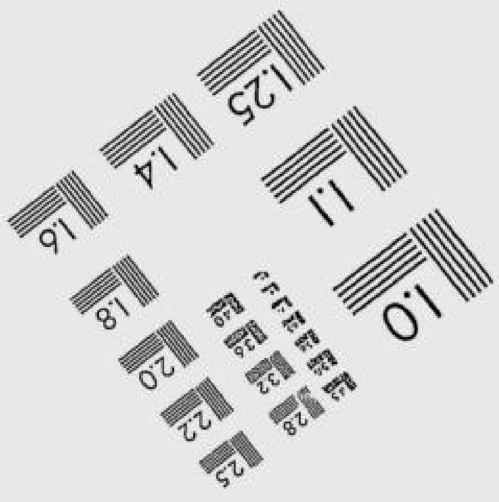
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